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ABSTRACT

The widely accepted notion that the management of resources in schools involves merely strategic decisions about the deployment of finances, staff, and materials must be contested. The school effectiveness movement ignores the social and political context of schools and, through emphasis upon superficial managerial matters, teaches pupils to strive for success within the status quo and to accept their positions if they fail. After an introduction, this essay examines Australian education at midcentury, the study of organization and schools, the school effectiveness movement, educational gains worth protecting and extending, and social responsibility in schools. A conclusion and 98 references are included in the essay. Four readings complete the monograph, including (1) "Education and Change in South Australia" (Malcolm Skilbeck); (2) "High School Reform: A Critique and a Broader Construct of Social Reality" (C. C. Yeakey and G. S. Johnston); (3) "Rethinking the Language of Schooling" (Henry A. Giroux); and (4) "Class, Ideology, and the Basic Skills Movement: A Study in the Sociology of Educational Reform" (H. Svi Shapiro). Each chapter provides relevant notes and references. An annotated bibliography and information about the author are included. (WTH)

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SCHOOLING, THE SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS MOVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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LAWRENCE ANGUS

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EED433 Management of Resources in Schools

Schooling, the School Effectiveness Movement and Educational Reform

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Richard Bates, *The Management of Culture and Knowledge*

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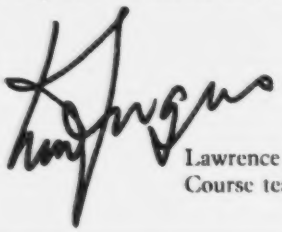
Series introduction

This series of monographs critically challenges conventional definitions of school management and school resources. Indeed, it is argued that the most important resources available to schools are cultural. These include conceptions of time, power, appropriate behaviour and dispositions, and knowledge. The management of such resources is considered through an examination of various curricular, pedagogical and administrative processes.

Each monograph develops the significance for educational administration and educational outcomes of such cultural resources. In this way, schooling and educational administration are seen to be inextricably located in a social and political context. The series, then, explores the links between education and society, educational administration and social order, cultural dispositions and educational opportunity, knowledge and hierarchy, school and community. Such issues are discussed at a theoretical and historical level in several monographs and, in others, their adminstrative and educational implications are illustrated by case studies.

An original essay summarising the major arguments concerning education and cultural resources is presented in each monograph. This is supplemented by several key articles. In addition, an annotated bibliography directs readers to important works which are relevant to the themes and issues of the monograph. It is expected that readers will draw connections between the material presented in the series and their own educational experiences. In this way they are encouraged to explore further the cultural and value-laden nature of education and educational administration, and the notion that cultural resources are the most important resources that are managed in schools.



Lawrence Angus,
Course team chairperson

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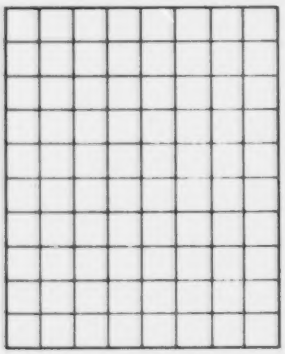
Schooling, the school effectiveness movement and educational reform



Introduction

In the first half of the 1980s there were a number of education reports in all states and also at the federal level. These created an impression that momentous educational changes were underway. Although the reports are quite varied in their scope and in their recommendations for improved education, many themes recur. It is not possible in the space of this monograph to examine any of the reports in detail, but it is essential to my overall argument that some of the major thrusts of the various reports be addressed in relation to their major implications for the administration of educational resources in schools.

I wish to argue that education in Australia, after one of its most progressive and enlightened (albeit in certain important ways, flawed) phases, must be protected by educators and citizens from being captured by a new conservatism in education and society, undertones of which can be detected, I believe, in many of the recent reports of committees of enquiry into education and the like. These reports include those of the Review Committee on Quality of Education in Australia (QERC Report) (1985), Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia (Keeves Report) (1982), Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia (Beasley Report) (1984), Department of Education, Queensland (1985), Ministerial Review into Post-Compulsory Education (Blackburn Report) (1985), New South Wales Education Department (Swann-McKinnon Report) (undated). The reports, with varying degrees of emphasis, advocate some form of core curriculum for schools, are concerned about narrowly defined standards of literacy and numeracy, seek to connect education more effectively to the demands of an industrial economy, and, despite a rhetoric of devolution, suggest ways of making teachers and schools more accountable to centralised authorities. The persistent, underlying rationale is that schools can be made to be more 'effective' in such ways. The reports, therefore, provide a sense of legitimacy for the superficially plausible 'school effectiveness movement' that has been sweeping the USA and which has made substantial inroads into Australian education discourse.

The importance of the growing 'school effectiveness movement' must be recognised at two levels. Firstly, it has been extremely influential overseas, especially in its country of origin, the United States, and is being increasingly supported in Australia (Duignan 1985). Don Edgar, Director of the Australian Institute for Family Studies, for instance, has been reported as arguing that schools in depressed urban areas in Australia should adopt the American

school effectiveness model (*Age*, 2 April 1985, p. 19) in order to boost the achievement levels of economically disadvantaged pupils. Edgar's views raise also the second level at which the 'school effectiveness movement' is important – it represents a recognition of genuine problems of schooling in modern industrial societies. However, the generally conservative solutions that it offers for these problems, I shall argue, are not only inadequate but, by presenting a fairly superficial analysis of educational problems, are likely to compound the educational disadvantage of many children.

To understand the problems that the school effectiveness movement seeks to redress, and the inadequacy of the solutions it offers, it will be necessary to examine traditions of education and school organisation, and challenges to those traditions. From this perspective we may better understand the problems that have in recent years led to the school effectiveness movement and a flurry of educational reports in the mid-1980s. This movement, and the reports, will be examined critically and suggestions will be made for genuine educational reforms that may contribute to democratic and egalitarian schooling. The aim of such reforms would be to create socially responsible schools.

Education at mid-century

By the middle of this century several major themes – democracy, social cohesion, social mobility and equality – were well established in the prevailing discourse about education in Australia. These themes are part of a traditional liberal democratic view of education and society, in which education is seen as capable of altering individual capacities and, therefore, individual positions in the stable and enduring social and economic structure. These assumptions were part of the framework upon which the dominant approaches to the sociology of education and educational administration throughout the western industrial world by the 1950s and 1960s – structural functionalism and human capital theory – are based. Both conceptualise education as a 'socially powerful, politically feasible means of attacking a broad range of remarkably diverse social and economic problems' (Papagiannis, Klees & Bickel 1982, p. 246) while simultaneously maintaining the essential equilibrium and continuity of society.

The purpose of social institutions, including education, according to the prevailing theory of structural functionalism, is to fulfil social needs and thus contribute to the functional unity of society. Harmony, or social order, is achieved by normative means that prevent serious, dysfunctional conflict. By encouraging a common belief system and appropriate social behaviour, education

contributes to social consensus and stability (Parsons 1959, 1960). Hence, 'an educational system functions to develop the technical skills and the norms necessary to the particular stage of society's development' (Papagiannis, Klees & Bickel 1982, p. 250. See also Clark 1962; Dreeben 1968). Social efficiency is served, by the recognition and reward of human potential, within existing social arrangements in which talented individuals will be elevated, largely through the education system, so that they may make their appropriate contribution to society.

Human capital theory has in common with structural functionalism an emphasis upon both the technical function of education and the efficient use of human resources (Karabel & Halsey 1977). In the view of neo-classical economics, the rigours of education, seen as an investment against deferred economic returns, test and justly reward the varying effort and talent of individuals. Liberal notions of equity and justice are comfortably accommodated within the dominant perspective of 'fair, meritocratic competition for the unequal social rewards offered' (Papagiannis, Klees & Bickel 1982, p. 251). Equal chances for all means a system that is, supposedly, both fair, at least in terms of access if not outcomes, *and* efficient.

The last point has proven to be the most important and pervasive, and also the most educationally disabling, of the general liberal perspective of schooling. Social and economic inequalities can in this view be ameliorated, or partially redressed, through the all-important notion of equality of opportunity. The social structure itself is not to be altered but opportunities for advancement within that structure were to be made fairer through equal access to education. And once the notion that educational success directly contributes to economic and social 'life chances' was widely accepted, along with the view that all children *did* actually have equal chances to do well at school, it was but a small step to conceive of the ideal society as one in which those with the greatest intelligence and who make the greatest effort (and who are therefore the most deserving) are promoted to positions of power and status. As Smith (1985) points out, such thinking in regard to education is currently extremely widespread in that 'people accept that their own material conditions could be improved, but that the social structure itself is basically fair' (Smith 1985, p. 15).

Such a social ideal is satirised by Young (1958) as a 'meritocracy'—a society in which achievement and success goes to those with the greatest 'I.Q. plus effort' (Bennett 1982, p. 164) since all are supposedly granted equal educational opportunity. Bennett explains the legacy of this notion:

> This doctrine of equality of opportunity had enormous implications for education itself. First, it assumed that the purpose of the education system was simply personal advancement in material terms. Above all, it endorsed the principle that education, like society itself, is a competition, a process which produces winners and losers. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the rules of the competition are fair – that is, that everyone has an equal chance
>
> (Bennett 1982, p. 165)

As in foot races, boxing matches and games of skill, in which the same (equal) rules lead to unequal results, those with ability would come out on top in education and society. As Rae et al. point out, '. . . equal means are used . . . to create, systematize and legitimate unequal prospects of success' (1981, p. 66). Just as the ability to lift heavy weights, for instance, is an indication of strength, the ability to do well in school is seen as an indication of talent and intelligence. But this does not simply mean that the strongest person necessarily lifts the heaviest weight and the smartest child comes top of the class. Allowance must also be made for *effort* by which individuals, if they try hard enough, can improve their chances of success. This logic forces all to try even harder and so eliminates mediocrity.

Bennett points out that it was in the mid-1960s that the liberal faith in the socially and economically beneficial effects of education, at the level of both the individual and society, reached its peak. As he puts it:

> Education was expected to establish an equal society, maintain economic growth and promote national prosperity, while at the same time providing everyone with higher incomes, interesting jobs and a pleasant middle-class life.
>
> (Bennett 1982, p. 165)

Such faith in education was not confined to Australia, for during the 1960s and early 1970s, as Kogan (1979) points out, the educational policies of most western countries were:

> based upon a belief in the ability of national authorities to prescribe purposes for education on the assumption that the investment of finance, of buildings and manpower and carefully thought out systems would enable countries to reach goals of a productive economy, stronger individual freedom and choice, and a more equal society.
>
> (Kogan 1979, p. 19)

The educational resources that were to be managed in this enterprise were, essentially, the pupils themselves. They were the human capital that the huge national investment of financial resources in schools was to develop.

Schools, then, have long been regarded within the predominent liberal tradition as meritocratic institutions in which differential rewards can be justified and accommodated within the ideals of western democracy (Clark 1972). Moreover, the socialisation process in schools, which results by and large in the acceptance of the meritocratic nature of society, is seen in this context as preserving common values which should be shared by society's members. Social stability is therefore continually enhanced and preserved. Any social change that may occur is necessarily piecemeal and adaptive, and, most importantly, is *internal* to the normative framework, the value consensus, of a given society (Parsons 1960). Thus although schools were thought to encourage some degree of change through individual social mobility and the competitive quest for material wealth, these need not be destructive of social harmony since, in the liberal view of the world, schools could, at the same time, both promote fair competition and also soften any tensions that struggles for wealth and position might otherwise create (McLennan 1985).

The basic assumption upon which this ameliorative ideal of education rested was that schools were, themselves, politically neutral. Because schools were thought to serve no vested interest but merely the universal cause of individual and social betterment, the only issue to be considered in educational administration was efficiency. It was believed that schools, like other organisations in the social system, should play their role as efficiently as possible and so would benefit from scientific techniques of administration which would enable more effective management of physical educational resources.

The study of organisations and schools

Organisational theory and educational administration have been firmly located within the traditional framework of structural functionalist assumptions which were discussed in the previous section. Administration is firmly located in theories of structural functionalism and systems theory, which regard the purposes of education and organisation as being unproblematically related to social harmony and social efficiency. This section summarises and critiques the prevailing approaches and, finally, introduces an alternative cultural perspective on schools as organisations.

Organisations as systems

Structural functionalist and human capital views of education are paralleled in traditional views of organisations. As Greenfield (1973, 1983, 1984), Bates (1980, 1981), Foster (1983) and others

have pointed out, traditional studies of schools as organisations have attempted to understand them according to technical or bureaucratic norms. The fundamental assumption which undergirds traditional approaches is that the structure and operation of organisations like schools can be explained by universal laws which exist and which can be empirically discovered. Contemporary organisation theorists typically claim that they are able to understand, predict and, ultimately, control the dynamics of organisations because their knowledge of organisations rests upon 'the method of science' (Greenfield 1983, 1985). Such control is thought by traditional organisational theorists to be possible because organisations are conceived of as *systems*, as functional components, which interact with larger systems called environments and the even larger system of society (Barnard 1938; Simon 1945; Katz & Kahn 1966).

The organic metaphor (Morgan 1981) of social system is consistent with the structural functionalist view of society and the place of education within it. According to Barnard (1938), organisations, like organisms, are possessed of a co-operative morality to which their human occupants seek a sense of commitment. Getzels, Lipham & Campbell (1968) explain that harmony and efficiency result from such commitment:

> when the needs of the individual and the goals of the system are congruent, there is a feeling of *identification* with the system. When the needs of the individual and the expectations of the role-set are congruent, there is a feeling of satisfaction and *belongingness* in the system. When the expectations of the roles and goals of the system are congruent, there is a feeling of *rationality* regarding the system.
> (Greenfield 1983, pp. 18–9)

That people *need* to identify with and belong to the system, be it organisation or society, is taken for granted as a basic tenet of human nature. This belief makes it possible, or even 'natural', to define the behaviour of those people or groups who do *not* conform and belong as being pathological or deviant and not oppositional. The purposes of person and organisation are thought to be, in their natural state, congruent.

From this point of view, the aim of the organisation theorist is to:

> improve organisations by making them more efficient and effective and to make them serve better the needs and interests of the individuals who inhabit them . . . The administration of the organization becomes a largely rational and technical matter.
> (Greenfield 1985, p. 5241)

Emphasis upon supposed universal laws, laws of behavioural science and universal (closed or open) systems, imbues organisations with a reified sense of independent reality which denies the fact that organisation is produced by people and can be reproduced by them:

> It is true that organizations appear to be solid, real entities that act independently of human control and are difficult to change. Yet the paradox is that the vital spark, the dynamic of organisation is made from nothing more substantial than people doing and thinking. Organizations are limited by and defined by human action.
>
> (Greenfield 1980, p. 27)

Organisation has thus become narrowly regarded as a thing, a completed product that is produced without the help of human hands, rather than as a continuous process of organising (Brown 1978; Greenfield 1983) in which power is exerted to ensure the co-operativeness of people (Selznick 1962; Weber 1968). This view of organisations resulted in the search for the 'One Best System' (Tyack 1984) in which schools would play an important part (Parsons 1959; Dreeben 1968):

> This was a heady vision and one in which education was a fundamental agency. For although many things were necessary for this desirable state of affairs to come about, three things were essential: a selection and allocation of individuals to appropriate positions, a system of socialisation into the norms and values of society and a system of rewards and inducements that would maintain motivation and commitment.
>
> (Bates 1982a, p. 15)

An important point in this vision of education in the 'one best system' is that the relationship between individual, school and society is regarded as unproblematic. Schools are viewed as exisiting within the normative framework of society which is accepted as given. Individuals, schools and society are taken to be functionally related.

Within the supposed social stability of the structural functionalist world, schools play an important part in ensuring that the harmony of the system is not disturbed by generational change. Indeed it is the *function* of the school and the family, the 'pattern maintenance' function, to ensure the commitment of diverse young people of various social and economic origins to the overriding values of the social system that would thus *remain* stable over time (Parsons 1957). Through a shared vision of the 'one best system' (Tyack 1974; Parsons 1959; Dreeben 1968), education could maintain across generations, it was argued, the motivation and

commitment to an idealised system which promised continual social progress (Bates 1982a). The work of education in controlling and guiding society towards the one best system was not to be underestimated because, according to Bressler's argument:

> Social change can be controlled by the application of disciplined intelligence . . . the educational process is the only alternative to stagnation or revolutionary violence. It is the duty of education to preside over gradualistic change toward a more perfect expression of the democratic tradition.
>
> (in Bates 1982a, p. 15)

It is against such an overly determined perspective, which sees schools as unproblematically inducting children into existing social arrangements, that Greenfield's critique of organisation theory can be seen to hold out hope for the possibility of change within the school system.

Schools as cultural sites

One particularly enlightening insight which Greenfield provides is in his description of schools as *sites* of *cultural* negotiation among those people who have a stake in them:

> what many people seem to want from schools is that schools reflect the values that are central and meaningful in their lives. If this view is correct, schools are cultural artefacts that people struggle to shape in their own image. Only in such form do they have faith in them; only in such form can they participate comfortably in them.
>
> (Greenfield 1973, p. 570)

This insight is extremely important because the functionalist rationality which still dominates approaches to school organisation and administration treats schools 'as merely *instructional* sites designed to pass onto students a "common" culture and set of skills that will enable them to operate effectively in the wider society' (Giroux 1984 p. 36, emphasis added). Such a view, based on a conception of education which separates fact from value and ends from means, assumes that schools are politically neutral whereas, when studied as both instructional *and* cultural sites:

> Schools must be seen as institutions marked by the same complex of contradictory cultures that characterize the dominant society. Schools are social sites constituted by a complex of dominant *and* subordinate cultures, each characterized by the power they have to define and legitimate a specific view of reality.
>
> (Giroux 1984, p. 37)

Thus, contradictions over such 'message systems' of schools as pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation (Bernstein 1977), and over class, gender, and political and social futures (Apple 1982, 1983;

Watkins 1983, 1985) create tensions which are mediated only by the influence of human agents upon the current practices and organisation of schooling. And these themselves have been produced by historical practice which has shaped educational structures in an ongoing dialectic of continuity and change of what is to constitute the culture of the school.

As Bates (1982b) makes quite clear, an understanding that schools are cultural sights is essential for any understanding of schools as organisations:

> Foster (1980), Giroux (1981), Greenfield (1979, 1980), and Bates (1980, 1981) have all argued the necessity of constructing a cultural analysis of educational administration as an alternative to the inherently sterile pursuit of a deterministic behavioural science. This is not solely because the dynamics of organisation can better be understood through such a perspective but also because educational organisations, above all, are committed to the maintenance, transmission and recreation of culture.
>
> (Bates 1982b, p. 9)

Culture is, in this view, 'the prime resource', and, one might add, the prime mediator and outcome, of educational practice.

What is being managed in schools therefore is, above all else, culture. The development of physical, financial and human resources itself involves cultural choices about *what counts* as appropriate knowledge, curriculum content, disadvantage, intelligence, behaviour, teacher-pupil relations, manners, speech, styles of dress and conversation, and many more. And once cultural choices are made in education, cultural discrimination is done to those whose culture is not compatible with that of the school. In most circumstances this means that, in particular, girls, children from working class and ethnic backgrounds, but also others, are disadvantaged in an education system that typically treats all children as if they had equal access to middle-class, male Anglo-culture.

The realisation that schools are essentially cultural sites is not new. Indeed, a number of educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s partially addressed this concern by attempting to make schooling more relevant to the lives of students of diverse cultural backgrounds. These reforms and the opportunities for educational advancement that they afforded, will be discussed in a later section. In the current educational climate, however, such a cultural perspective on schools as organisations is being submerged in an emphasis upon a narrow conception of school 'effectiveness' which entrenches the naïve functionalist views that schools are merely instructional sites, that the purposes of schooling are given, and that all students should embrace the equal opportunities

provided to them in schools to excel within a stratified social system.

The school effectiveness movement

The school effectiveness movement has received an extraordinary amount of attention in the United States in recent years, and has been enthusiastically supported in many quarters in Australia (Duignan 1985). I will argue in this section that the movement is mistaken in that, although it correctly searches for school-level reasons for differences in educational outcomes, by isolating schools from their social and political context it can find only factors which in none too subtle ways induct students into the status quo and the prevailing school culture. In short, the differences that effective schools claim to make, make very little difference in terms of the life chances of pupils.

The section begins by discussing earlier reform attempts to bring about more equitable education, and then examines the problem of whether or not schools themselves make a difference to educational outcomes. The school effectiveness movement and recent American reports on education, which take as given that schools *do* make a difference and which attempt to distinguish between effective and ineffective schools, are then examined in detail. This is followed by a critique of the most prominent of the American reports, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). Finally, I suggest that several of the recent Australian reports on education, while not as uncompromising as their American counterparts, also contain suggestions and recommendations that may be interpreted as socially conservative and educationally regressive.

Education for individual and national development

The traditional 'faith' in the efficacy of education, a faith which in many ways still persists even in times of high unemployment and recession, is characterised in Australia and other Western nations by firstly, the implicit promise of the education system that a relatively comfortable middle-class life would be available to those who strove for it; and secondly, the belief that a better educated community would lead to a stronger economy, increased standards of living and greater equality.

Such faith in education has been fuelled for the past century by two assumptions. Firstly, it requires a belief that education is 'neutral' and serves the common good. Secondly, it is sustained by a belief that educational inputs can be effectively managed to produce specific outputs. In comprehensive public schools, it was thought, the skills of all children could be developed. Investment

in education, therefore, was the mobilisation of resources which could be deployed for the development of 'human capital'. The tradition of equality in educational reform amounted to attempts to provide equal access to schools for the children of disadvantaged groups so that relative success rates of children from different backgrounds could be evened out.

One version of the 'human capital' approach to educational reform was the belief that the educational performance of disadvantaged children could be improved if schools, in their allocation of resources, were to discriminate positively in their favour. In the 1960s and 1970s such a policy of 'compensatory education' was adopted in the United Kingdom following the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education–England 1967) and was the basis of the 'Head Start' program in the United States. In Australia, the notion that schools should be resourced according to relative 'needs' was the major recommendation of the extremely influential Karmel Report (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973). Under the policy of 'needs funding', schools still receive direct federal grants under the Disadvantaged Schools Program to help reduce the special disadvantages of their pupils. Such faith in public education was built on the belief that schools could deliver opportunities for social and economic success to pupils of talent from all backgrounds. The accumulation of evidence, however, even during the 1960s and early 1970s when public faith in education was at its highest, indicated that education reforms had failed to significantly alter the relative educational outcomes and life chances of children from dominant and non-dominant social groups. Schools, if this evidence is to be believed, cannot offer the chance of upward social mobility that they promise. The question of whether or not schools do make a difference, however, is none the less a contested and enduring one.

Do schools make a difference to educational outcomes?

The most influential contributors to the argument that schools offer very little opportunity for social mobility are the American scholars Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972). After massive studies, both concluded that schooling itself has little effect on measured educational attainment. Both found that although there were variations in achievement levels of pupils between schools, these were not as great as the variations within schools. As Jencks concluded, 'variations in what children learn in schools depend largely on variations in what they bring to school, not in variations in what schools offer them' (1973, p. 53). Schools themselves, that is, make extremely little difference.

This conclusion has been challenged in the United Kingdom by Rutter (Rutter et al. 1979; Rutter 1983), who maintains that schools do make a difference and, moreover, that his research indicates which particular aspects of school organisation most directly contribute to the successful performance of pupils. These are important conclusions – not least because they have helped to spawn the 'school effectiveness' movement. Careful analysis suggests, however, that despite the contrasts that have been drawn between the claims of Rutter and those of Jencks and Coleman, by Rutter himself as well as by others (Rutter 1983; Rogers 1979), the findings of all three are remarkably similar. After comparing the respective claims of Rutter, Coleman and Jencks, Murphy, for instance, concludes:

> there can be no doubt that Coleman, Jencks and Rutter are in substantial agreement. In each case, differences in the family background and in the intellectual ability of the student population account for much the greater part of the variance identified. In its conventional usage, then, schools for Rutter, as for Coleman and Jencks evidently make little difference
>
> (Murphy 1985, p. 10).

Murphy suggests that the differences claimed by Rutter (1983) are semantic or rhetorical rather than substantial. Rutter draws an important distinction between 'inequalities' in attainment and 'overall levels of attainment' which allows him to point out that 'improving school will not necessarily make any difference to individual variations. But it may have a decisive impact in raising overall standards of attainment' (Rutter et al. 1979 p. 7). This distinction is important because, as Murphy points out:

> In that Rutter's claim pertains to the effect of schools on 'overall attainment', whilst Coleman and Jencks' relates to the effect of schools on 'variations in attainment', the resulting claims are, by this distinction, merely different not mutually exclusive. . . .Rutter is left with a study which cannot support, still less vindicate his charge that Coleman and Jencks 'underestimate' the effects of schooling.
>
> (Murphy 1985, pp. 110–11)

Moreover, Rutter's claims can be criticised at a methodological level, especially in relation to his overestimate of the effect of school processes compared with family backgrounds. Murphy (1985) and Ashenden (1979) suggest that the findings of Rutter are trivial in that the differences that 'good' schools are alleged to make, in themselves, make little if any difference to pupils' life chances.

Such criticisms can also be made of the more recent school effectiveness literature which is sweeping the United States. The factors which are said to improve 'school effectiveness' are often trivial and the methodological procedures, which have led a host of researchers to conclude that such factors are 'effective', are, to say the least, questionable (Rowan 1985).

The school effectiveness movement and the American reports

Briefly, school effectiveness research began as an attempt to identify teacher behaviours that were associated with improved student learning (e.g. Good 1979; Barr & Dreeben 1978; Clark, Lotto & McCarthy 1980). Many of these researchers began with a conviction that Coleman and Jencks were wrong in their conclusion that teachers and administrators could have little effect on student achievement. They believed that examples of school differences could only be found by examining *what actually occurred in classrooms* in order to detect direct causal links between teaching practices and educational outcomes. More recently, however, with the publication in the United States of a wave of national reports on education that call for a resurgence of 'excellence' in schools, the school effectiveness research seeks to find 'connections between school-level policies and practices and important student outcomes, e.g., achievement, behaviour and self-concept' (Murphy J.F. 1985. See also Clark 1980; Goodlad 1979; Hallinger et al. 1983; St Clair 1984; Bell 1983; Waterman 1984).

The American reports (e.g. National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983; National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology 1983; Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy 1983) tapped public concern about not only education but also America's future. The current wave of support for educational reform in the United States expresses a belief that the raising of 'standards' through more rigorous testing and screening in schools, and emphasis on the basics and academic 'excellence' (often seen as the same thing), will stimulate America's productivity and reassert her flagging world economic and even military dominance. This point is illustrated in the opening passage of the most influential and widely publicised of the reports, *A Nation At Risk:*

> Our Nation is a risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. . . the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising

> tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people . . .
> If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today we might well have viewed it as an act of war. . . We have, in effect, been committing an act of educational disarmament.
>
> (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 5)

The Commissioners are in no doubt that 'the United States is under challenge from many quarters' (p. 36) and that their recommendations 'will prepare these children for far more effective lives in a far stronger America' (p. 36). The recommendations are to make schools 'excellent' by, in the main, 'generally "getting tough" with students, teachers and even administrators' (Passow 1984, p. 676).

One of the major contributors to the effective schools movement in America, Joseph F. Murphy (not to be confused with the British scholar, Murphy, whose analysis of the claims of Rutter, Coleman and Jencks is discussed above), suggests that the findings of effective schools research can be 'grouped into 14 effectiveness variables or factors, seven of which deal with curriculum and instruction issues while the remainder focus on school learning climate' (Murphy, J.F. 1985, p. 2).

The *curriculum and instruction* factors are that in 'effective' schools:

- students have more of an *opportunity to learn* through efficient management of time and tasks
- there is a highly *co-ordinated curriculum* in which 'objectives, materials, instruction and assessment are all tightly aligned'
- there is *active teaching* with direct instruction of the whole class and close monitoring by the teacher
- there is a *clear academic mission and focus*, the clear goal being the improvement of student achievement with special emphasis on the basic skills
- principals exhibit strong *instructional leadership* by spending much of their time 'co-ordinating and controlling instruction and curriculum'
- there is a plan of *structured staff development* to 'upgrade the skills and co-ordinate the professional growth of staff members'
- finally, and most importantly in much of the school effectiveness literature, in effective schools there is *frequent monitoring* of student progress, and administrators discuss test results with the whole staff and individual teachers as well as with parents so that 'the staff is held accountable for test results'.

(adapted from Murphy, J.F. 1985, pp. 1-2)

With regard to *school learning climate* factors, effective schools are characterised by:

- high *standards and expectations* of students which 'are predicated on the belief that all students can learn', and which are reflected in course requirements, rigorous grading, and 'a press for excellence in everything that staff and students undertake'
- a *safe and orderly environment* for learning which is established and maintained through clear rules which are fairly and consistently enforced
- a system of *widespread rewards and recognition*, most importantly for 'academic excellence', but also for 'citizenship, participation in student affairs, service to school and community, and so forth', such awards being presented to a large number of students 'in public ceremonies as often as possible'
- many opportunities for *student participation and responsibility*
- a strong degree of *home-school co-operation and support* in which the school encourages the support of parents for its goals, discipline policies and homework policy
- *collaborative organisation processes* which include 'open communications within and across hierarchical levels, shared decision making, colleagueship in planning and development, constructive conflict resolution, and the building of consensus across divergent groups'
- a sense of *staff and student cohesion and support* which is developed through the promotion of ceremonies and symbols that reinforce school goals, and also through teacher concern for student welfare. To these ends, 'effective schools deliberately arrange activities so that the student culture supports important school norms'.

(adapted from Murphy, J.F. 1985, p. 3)

From Murphy's summary it is clear that school effectiveness researchers have attempted to identify 'teacher behaviours and school practices that intersected neatly with practitioner wisdom on what schools should do to become *academically* productive' (Cuban 1984, p. 130, emphasis added). Such a measure of effectiveness of schooling, however, is clearly inadequate in several ways.

The limitations of school 'effectiveness'

This section examines the limitations of the notion of 'effectiveness' that is employed in the 'school effectiveness' literature.

Firstly, the concept of effectiveness is extremely narrow. Educational outcomes are measured in terms of standardised tests of 'basic' literacy and numeracy skills. As Cuban points out, 'school effectiveness research and programs ignore many skills, habits, and

attitudes beyond the reach of paper-and-pencil tests' (1984, p. 132). A traditional and limited notion of 'what counts' as education is reinforced:

> repetitive, low-level intellectual skills are now surrounded by a halo of legitimacy. Filling in blanks, getting test-wise to multiple-choice items, and completing exercises elevate tedious tasks to the status of effective instruction. Concern for student interest, motivation and the life of the mind diminishes with accelerated use of dittos, seatwork and pre- and post-tests. . .
>
> (Cuban 1984, p. 148)

Secondly, the emphasis upon standardised achievement tests raises the question of for whom, and in whose interests, schools are to be effective. These tests are intended to stimulate motivation and competition, but such tests have been, in the past, a major element of cultural discrimination in schools because they are constructed according to the values and experiences of certain social groups (Karier 1972). As long as such tests are used as 'the absolute authority for promotion, graduation, admission, and evaluation', argue Yeakey & Johnston:

> We cannot take comfort in the old myth that only ability matters in our highly competitive, highly achievement-oriented society, for the very high correlation between achievement and family income remains unaltered.
>
> (Yeakey & Johnston 1985, p. 162)

In school effectiveness rhetoric schooling is treated as being politically and ideologically neutral. This is somewhat ironic given that the origins of school effectiveness research were in attempts to improve student academic performance in schools in areas of poverty and disadvantage.

Thirdly, and related to the previous point, the narrow concept of 'effective' schools recreates 'the dream of an efficient one-best-system of instruction of an earlier generation of reformers' (Cuban 1984, p. 149). The efficiency and uniformity of schooling are to be ensured, according to the American reports, by making the form and content of instruction the same for all – thus disadvantaging those who do not accommodate to the culture of the traditional, 'effective' school. Such a demand for uniformity often means that school administration and teaching are reduced to a narrow range of *techniques* for improving test results.

The language of school effectiveness and the American reports is replete with enthusiastic references to direct instruction, whole-class instruction, teacher-directed activities, time on task, continual monitoring of student work, accountability, and the like. It does not, however, address educational issues and concepts such as the

'hidden curriculum', which, as Yeakey & Johnston point out, is uncritically and unknowingly moved 'to center stage' through the apparent acceptance of 'the discredited notion that all students, irrespective of their social status, sex, and racial, ethnic, or religious background will be treated equally by being held to the same academic standards' (Yeakey & Johnston 1985, p. 167). Critical and reflective thinking, social inquiry and creative activity on the part of teacher or pupil are pushed aside in preference for the cookbook of effective methods.

The drive to make instruction efficient and scientific can be argued to be anti-educational since administrators and teachers attempt to establish 'tighter organisational linkages between what teachers teach and the content of test items' (Cuban 1984, p. 133). By teaching only what is to be tested and how to go about doing the tests, reading and mathematics scores are improved and so demonstrate that the school is 'effective' or even 'excellent' (Rowan 1985). Educational administrators, therefore, are encouraged to value control, predicability and efficiency in their schools such that, as Wirth (1983) notes, the scientific management which has long characterised schools, despite its limitations (Watkins 1985, 1986), is legitimated and extended by the American reports.

In other ways, too, proposed measures of 'effectiveness' in school are inadequate. They exclude, or at least fail to acknowledge, 'the pleasures that teachers derive from their relationships with children, the unpredictable, the unexpected, the unplanned, and the joyful' (Cuban 1984, p. 149), in a vision of schooling that amounts to little more than extended spelling bees, multiplication tables, and the learning and recall of 'facts'. Perhaps the most serious limitation of both the American reports and the school effectiveness movement in general, however, is quite simply that they propose nothing new. It has all been advocated and tried before (most recently after the Soviets launched *Sputnik* in 1957). The simplistic and conservative prescriptions for 'effectiveness', 'improved standards' and 'excellence'—terms which are treated as shibboleths but which are undefined, unspecified, and ultimately meaningless—are merely rhetorical calls to action which reinforce the notion that education should serve the status quo.

America at risk from *A Nation at Risk*

In most of the recent reports on education in America, particularly *A Nation at Risk*, the major emphasis is that effective education can help the nation perform better economically and so reverse 'a steady 15-year decline in industrial productivity, as one great American industry after another falls to world competition' (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 18).

The economic analysis of America's industrial productivity and capacity that is provided in *A Nation at Risk* is extraordinarily naïve. The simplistic assumption seems to be that decline in industrial productivity is somehow directly linked to educational performance rather than to alterations in word economic affairs. The economic 'crisis', none the less, is regarded as being extremely alarming to American citizens because 'Americans like to think of this Nation as the preeminent country for generating the great ideas and material benefits for all mankind' (National Commission for Excellence in Education 1983, pp. 17–18).

The proposed educational solutions for America's economic problems are not simply direct instruction, more time on task, more rigorous testing and emphasis on the basics. These are to occur within a framework of competitiveness which builds on 'the persistent and authentic American dream that superior performance can raise one's state in life and shape one's own future' (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 15). This dream (along with 'the natural abilities of the young that cry out to be developed', the dedication of teachers, 'examples of local success as a result of superior effort', the ingenuity of education experts, and the belief that 'education is an investment in ever-renewable human resources') is one of 'the essential raw materials needed to reform an educational system [which] are waiting to be mobilized through effective leadership' (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 15). It is the dream of classical liberalism involving a commitment to individual competition as summarised in a frontispiece to the report:

> All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.
>
> (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 4)

Equity, as in the long tradition of education in Western societies, amounts merely to providing equal opportunities for all to compete according to the same rules. The simplistic logic of such reports seems to be that, by stimulating individual competition in schools, overall standards will be raised and the industrial and military competitiveness of America will be enhanced. This belief is allegedly shared by the American people who are said to consider 'education more important than developing the best industrial system or the strongest military force, perhaps because they

understood education as the cornerstone of both '(National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, p. 16–17). The limitations of such a world-view are summarised by Tyack & Hansot:

> The new conventional wisdom, appearing in prestigious reports, holds that the essence of life is competition – between individuals and between nations – and that public schooling should be framed to ensure success in that contest. Disappeared or masked is the vision of using schooling as a means of giving the oppressed a fair chance, of reflecting the pluralist cultures of society, or of following the path of cooperation rather than the unremitting competition between individuals and between nations.
>
> (Tyack & Hansot 1984, p. 66)

Issues of social and political justice are swamped by the concern to develop in the schools willing and compliant workers in a uniform and regulated society. As such the reforms 'echo traditional commitments to public schools as agents of cultural imposition and economic regulation' (Finkelstein 1984, p. 277).

Only in America?

The reports in the United States illustrate, more than anything else, the conservative direction in which education has shifted in that nation. This is perhaps not surprising in a nation which re-elected as president Ronald Reagan and is seemingly undergoing a re-birth of moral conservatism and 'traditional American values'. But what of Australia with social democratic governments federally and in most states?

During the first half of the 1980s the Commonwealth and every State and Territory commissioned education enquiries. And while the reports that have resulted from these enquiries contain a mixture of progressive and regressive suggestions, they reflect undertones of a new conservatism which challenges many of the limited gains made in education during the previous two decades.

Firstly, the Australian reports, like those in America, seem to be dominated by considerations of skills, especially literacy and numeracy. Although these are defined as 'basic' skills, their development, essentially through increased testing to raise standards, is seen as being of crucial importance both for its own sake and because the possession of such skills is thought to enhance employment opportunities. This can be argued to be a somewhat curious notion of basic skills, for it overlooks the fact that the reason for learning the basics was once to facilitate pupils' enquiry into history, literature, study of society and the like. Instead of embracing educational vision, social understanding,

insight and enlightenment, however, emphasis on 'the basics' substitutes a concern for the instrumental and vocational aspects of education, and for the closer alignment of education and industry. Moreover, amongst the authors of the various reports there seems to be some uncertainty about how high or low 'standards' currently are. According to the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia, for instance:

> The Committee received many written submissions referring to standards in literacy and numeracy, and received much oral evidence on the subject. Rightly or wrongly, there is a growing belief that standards are slipping below acceptable levels and that many students are poorly educated and even unemployable.
>
> In responding to this concern, the Committee did not start from the position that standards of literacy and numeracy and written and spoken expression are declining, for it has seen no clear research evidence supporting that contention. The Committee started from the position that community and business life requires higher standards than those of the past.
>
> (Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia 1984, p. 29)

The Commonwealth's Review Committee on Quality of Education in Australia (1985) had equal difficulty in dealing with the question of where 'standards' are at and where they should be.

The current prominence that is given to 'standards' and 'the basics' by the report writers, however reluctantly, may lead not only to a narrow emphasis in schools, but also to more of 'blaming the victims'. For, as Tickell correctly points out in relation to the current emphasis on literacy:

> The fact is that illiteracy was no problem for employers, or the press, or the governments [in the mid-60s when migrant and aboriginal issues were raised by teachers]. Illiteracy has always been a massive personal tragedy for people but it was not a social problem. . . There was work for them. . . Illiteracy, or alleged illiteracy (and it's difficult to know which is being discussed at any time) becomes a social problem when jobs for those people disappear, and when they become visible, and when using them becomes convenient. It is very convenient at the moment to maintain the fiction that the unemployed are illiterate and are therefore unemployable. . .
>
> (Tickell 1981, p. 5)

A second but related major feature of the Australian reports is the almost universal recommendation that curricula be constructed from units, some of which are part of 'core' subjects, others 'options', but all assembled under particular subject groupings. In the case of the Western Australian report (Committee of Inquiry in

Education in Western Australia), for instance, there are seven such groupings: Language and Communication, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Physical and Health Education, Vocational and Personal Awareness, and Practical and Creative Arts (1984, p. 26). The suggested balance between core and optional units in the curriculum varies among the reports, but is generally one which, as in the Western Australian report, is claimed to allow simultaneously for both rigour and flexibility:

> the Committee believes that the unit system must not be a 'smorgasbord' approach to schooling, but that it should contain compulsory provisions for all students, with increasing choice as a student progresses from year 8 to year 12. In other words, the Committee is proposing a much more flexible system of schooling, without sacrificing rigour or achievement of standard requirements (Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia 1984, p. 27)

By taking such an each-way bet, several reports simply ignore the dilemma that is inherent in selecting core or optional curricula, in whatever way 'core' is defined (Skilbeck 1983). The difficulty is that any uniformly imposed curriculum perpetuates disadvantage through cultural discrimination. On the other hand, the history of curriculum alternatives in Australia is that options, too, have been socially and economically reproductive in that a distinction has usually been made between 'advanced' and 'elementary', 'academic' and 'non-academic', 'hard' and 'soft' options; and 'bright' or 'dumb' pupils have been steered into appropriate 'choices'. There is no doubt that this is a difficult curriculum issue, but it can be argued that what appears to be a current preference for a reversion to a more centrally prescribed curriculum is an educationally damaging response to the problem.

There are a number of other problems raised by the various reports. There is much concern with accreditation, with removing control of Year 12 certification from tertiary institutions, and establishing common education certificates. While this may allow broadening of courses in some senses, it may be restrictive in others in that existing alternatives, such as the Tertiary Orientation Program and the Schools' Year Twelve and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) in Victoria, are devalued or rejected. There is much rhetoric of 'participation', 'decentralisation', and 'devolution' concerning educational governance throughout Australia, but, with the amount of attention given to matters such as central accreditation, it is not clear in most states that such rhetoric will be matched by genuine local control of education (Noyce 1983; O'Rourke & McGowan 1985; Skilbeck 1983).

The contradictory possibilities in the reports, the combination of progressive and regressive recommendations, make them fascinating documents. While a neo-conservative, instrumental view of education seems to have been blandly accepted, in the main, in the United States, in the Australian context greater contestation of conservative recommendations can be expected from teacher unions and professional groups, and from highly placed radical and progressive educators. None the less, Skilbeck cautions:

> Despite such convulsions in recent years as the shake-out of top management in Victoria, the establishment of an education commission in New South Wales, and the move in several states towards such functional groupings as 'curriculum' and 'schools' in place of the old primary and secondary divisions, only the wilder or more optimistic prophets speak confidently of revolution in these conservative days. Consolidation in structures and caution in policy seem better fitted to low population growth, financial stringency, and the retreat from education (but not industrial training) as a major item on the political agenda.
>
> (Skilbeck 1983, p. 99)

Skilbeck's point about a current 'retreat from education', especially, is worth pondering. If it is true that the current reports and debate on education in Australia have been influenced by a new conservatism (Hinkson 1985), one aspect of which is the forging of even closer links between education and industry, then we must indeed search for ways to halt this 'retreat from education'.

In the following section I shall argue that in a somewhat different economic climate gains were made in education in the past two decades. These gains, which recognise that education involves resources of knowledge and culture, must be protected in the current conservative climate. Such gains, I shall then argue in the final section of this essay, could be extended by responsible educators who would treat schools more fully as cultural sites within a social and political context. Genuine reform would then replace current technical and instrumental concerns with educational ones.

Gains worth protecting and extending

I have argued throughout this essay that education in Australia has been characterised by narrow and persistent conceptions of social control and regulation, equality and social mobility. These limited conceptions have contributed to the manner in which education has played a part in the maintenance of social and economic inequalities. Education, I have argued, has consistently sorted and allocated children to a hierarchy of status and opportunity while

seeming to offer equal chances for all. Such allocation, because of the cultural discrimination which occurs in schools, has more to do with the attitudes and attributes that pupils bring to schools than with their actual talent or intelligence. Such characteristics of traditional education are reinforced, I have argued, in the conservative elements of the current educational reform movement.

There was a stage during the 1960s and 1970s, however, before the long economic boom of the post-war period ended and the links between education and the economic order were tightened, when there was in Australia and elsewhere a limited reform movement which was very different from that which we are currently witnessing. That movement, which partially addressed the problem of cultural discrimination in schools, was organised around attempts to make education 'relevant'; that is, to relate the experience of schooling to the life experience of students. Some legitimation was given to this push for relevance in education by the Karmel report of 1973 which enumerated companion themes to that of relevance–equality, diversity and participation:

> The Committee's identification of educational deficiencies [lack of resources, gross inequalities, and quality of schooling] itself reflects the values held by the Committee, as do the remedies proposed. There is a number of values which have informed the Committee's deliberations. They are: the pursuit of equality in the sense of making, through schooling, the overall circumstances of children's education as nearly equal as possible; the attainment of minimum standards of competence for life in the modern, democratic, industrial society; the concept of schooling as part of life as well as a preparation for life; the notion of education as a life-long experience, of which attendance at primary and secondary schools is one phase; diversity among schools in their structures, curricula, and teaching methods; the devolution, as far as is practicable, of the making of decisions on those working in or with the schools–teachers, pupils, parents and the local community; the involvement of the community in school affairs.
>
> (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973, p. 139)

The school-level reforms which preceded, accompanied, and were influenced by the Karmel report led to a proliferation of courses in schools, many of which incorporated 'individual progression', and which included studies in current events, political and social issues, mass media, the environment and local history. Units of study were organised around themes, especially in English, which included an exploration of personal and social issues such as family relationships, sexual behaviour, drugs and war. In some schools there was an emphasis upon study of, and in,

the community. Experiments in non-competitive and non-graded assessment were tried, and teachers attempted to make schools relevant, humane and less authoritarian.

Such a focus in schools, upon personal and social values and upon a wide spectrum of social life and social issues, was a direct challenge to the previously hegemonic curriculum and to the hegemonic culture. By *hegemonic* I mean that the culture and curricula that are generally accepted as standard in schools are not normal and neutral. Instead, they are built upon, incorporate and assert the values, beliefs and dispositions of the dominant groups in society or, to put it another way, the ruling class.

Focus in the 1960s and 1970s upon contemporary issues and on life as it is lived by society members prompted a different view of the past which was concerned not merely with facts but with questions about how it was that things got to be the way they are. As Shapiro points out in relation to the American experience at that time:

> The expansion and diversification of the curriculum during this period. . . reduce[d] the ordered hierarchical character of school knowledge. In this sense the curriculum reforms initiated during the 1960s did indeed undermine the epistemological bases for social ranking and hierarchy that are embedded in the process of schooling. More directly, however, the incorporation of experiences and knowledge more closely related to the lives of students (particularly those most often excluded from, or unsuccessful in, the educational process) erodes the traditional separation of school experience from real life. . . [And,] to sustain the notion of 'becoming educated' (where education refers to the selective transmission and incorporation of cultural 'capital') requires that schools provide experiences that are marked by their separateness from the life of students (some more than others) and whose availability or accessibility can thus be regulated by the school.
>
> (Shapiro 1983, p. 17–18)

The essential argument here is that social and economic differences are largely transmitted and reinforced, within traditional school practices, by the ability of pupils to master the academic, hegemonic curriculum – but this selection process becomes problematic if the curriculum no longer reflects the dominant culture:

> By allowing the inclusion of a greatly extended range of curriculum experiences, many of which were more directly related to the lives of the poor, minorities, or working-class students, the particular character of 'cultural capital', which is both the source and the product of middle-class advantage, was threatened.
>
> (Shapiro 1983, p. 18)

Hostility towards broadening the curriculum, however, came not just from the middle class whose ability to transmit its social and economic position would be eroded, but from all sections which had accepted the previous hegemony. The renewed emphasis upon basic skills and prescribed curricula in recent years, therefore, amounts to a call for:

> a return to a clearly stated, well-ordered hierarchy of school knowledge, and for the elaboration of an explicitly laid out, standardized mode of evaluation. Only this, it appears to its protagonists, guarantees the continuation of the traditional role of schooling in the reproduction of the social division of labor, and the fulfilment of expectations regarding social and occupational mobility.
>
> (Shapiro 1983, p. 21)

The status of terms like 'effectiveness', 'standards' and 'basics' in the current education debates and reports reflects the extensiveness of the return to such traditional schooling.

Some important qualifications need to be made here, however. The issues out of which curricular and organisation reforms grew and were asserted in the 1960s and 1970s—the study and understanding of contemporary social life, and the attempt to understand the social and cultural context of the school—are still powerful in the minds of many educators despite recent changes. Some of these concerns, indeed, may be found within the recent reports, notably within the Victorian Blackburn report (Ministerial Review of Post-Compulsory Education, 1985), and, most especially, in the the Victorian Ministerial Papers (Education Department of Victoria 1983, 1984) which offer the most promise of genuine reform in educational governance, school organisation and curriculum. An interesting point about these two Victorian reports is that they offer a number of differing recommendations. In particular, there is considerable tension between them in relation to curriculum.

Another qualification regarding the 1960s and 1970s reforms is that they, too, were limited. They were limited, especially, in two important ways. Firstly, as the research of Rice (1983) demonstrates, despite much rhetoric, media hype, and the official control of curriculum being passed largely from administrators to teachers, there was extraordinarily little change in classroom practice as:

> teachers continue[d] to produce socially and politically conservative curricula independently of formal administrative intervention or parental direction. . . [because]. . . the ideological conservatism of teachers, their limited resources, the social resolution of the

> tensions between the pursuit of academic and student failure, and a pattern of interlocking but exclusive social networks continue[d] to set limits to curriculum decision-making.
>
> (Rice 1983, p. 40)

Only in a minority of schools, often dubbed 'alternative', 'open' or even 'freedom' schools, was there extensive change and, even then in many cases, reform was limited in a second way – by its overriding concern for individual relativism. That is, although making substantial gains that should be protected, the reforms were flawed by an emphasis upon the individual interests and individual progress of pupils (thus preserving one of the tenets of classical liberalism) which arguably trivialised the notion of relevance. The individual pupil was severed from an understanding of shared social concerns and social action. Individual interest was not harnassed towards a critical appraisal of individual and social alternatives and possibilities. It merely celebrated individual differences. Although values were central in more open and relevant curricula, values clarification too often amounted to individual value preferences rather than to a critical scrutiny of existing mores against standards of freedom, justice, democracy and emancipation.

It is towards some pointers for a more educative and liberatory conception of schooling – one which builds upon gains of the past while being suspicious of traditions, and which looks to genuine concerns that may have been distorted in current debates – that I turn in the next and final section.

Pointers for socially responsible schools

This monograph has argued that, even in the relatively progressive era of the 1960s and 1970s, the ideology that has guided school practices and educational thinking has been essentially conservative. The concerns of administrators and teachers have largely been about practical issues of implementation of generally agreed principles and not about the connections between education and power, culture, politics and life chances. In this section I argue that any genuine educational reform can grow only out of consideration of these latter issues. This means that we must think critically about education and subject to scrutiny the educational practices and concepts that we have generally taken for granted. The concepts of equality and democracy in education, in particular, I argue, must be radically re-examined and related to the social and political context in which education takes place.

Questioning the 'taken for granted' in education

Because knowledge is regarded as received truth, as neutral and as absolute rather than as socially constructed and contested:

> The issue of how teachers, students and representatives from wider society generate meaning tends to be obscured in favor of the issue of how people can master someone else's meaning, thus depoliticizing both the notion of school culture and the notion of classroom pedagogy.
>
> (Giroux 1984, p. 37)

By disallowing the construction of meaning, or of alternative meanings, schooling 'ignores the dreams, histories and visions that people bring to schools' (Giroux 1984, p. 37).

It is in rejecting such acceptance of 'the given' that progressive educational reform might begin. I wish to emphasise this point above all else – that the beginnings of socially responsible schooling can grow only if teachers and administrators (and also pupils and parents) are prepared to subject to scrutiny all that is 'taken for granted' in our approaches to education, school knowledge and school practices.

There is no denying that it may be difficult to generate such critical scrutiny in teachers. After all, many teachers are preoccupied with the incessant minutiae of day-to-day teaching requirements. Moreover, they have become socialised through their own schooling, teacher training, and teaching experience to regard accepted practices as appropriate. This does not mean, however, that such a task should be dismissed as a fanciful or Utopian dream. Indeed, the opportunity for such critical reflection and reassessment of educational priorites is currently being afforded and encouraged under both the Commonwealth's Participation and Equity Program and the Victorian School Improvement Plan.

Such a reassessment would mean examining critically the assumptions and interests that are embodied in accepted notions of schooling and served by particular conceptions of knowledge. It would also involve thinking about how education and society came to be as they are. Critical reflection would begin by examining our own attitudes:

> Instead of mastering and refining the use of methodologies, teachers and administrators should approach education by examining their own perspectives about society, schools, and emancipation. Rather than attempting to escape from their own ideologies and values, educators should confront them critically so as to understand how society has shaped them as individuals. . . Put another way, teachers and administrators, in particular, must attempt to

> understand how issues of class, gender and race have left an imprint upon how they think and act. Such a critical interrogation provides the foundation for a democratic school.
>
> (Giroux 1984, p. 39)

By beginning to understand how, and more importantly *why*, we think as we do about important issues that are central to schooling, we are no longer absolved from personal responsibility for that which we do in the name of 'school policy', 'the education system', or even 'education'. The teacher or administrator is thus forced to break with the bureaucratic rationality which sanctifies unthinking, uncritical observance of established norms of organisational behaviour, and to make significant moral choices about how she or he will both alter individual teaching practices and also attempt to influence fellow teachers and administrators to do likewise.

Teachers and administrators would also attempt to be socially responsible in their relationships with pupils by endeavouring to develop in them, also, the same standards of critical reflection that are expected of educators. Fitzclarence & Giroux offer some pointers to how this might begin:

> To start, teachers would have to develop forms of knowledge and classroom social practices that *work with* the experiences that students bring to the schools. This means confirming such experiences so as to give students an active voice in institutional settings that traditionally attempt to silence them by ignoring their cultural capital. This demands taking seriously the language forms, styles of presentation, dispositions, forms of reasoning, and cultural forms that give meaning to student experiences. . .
>
> Second, . . . [teachers would] need to *work on* the experiences that students bring to the school. This means that such experiences in their varied cultural forms have to be interrogated critically so as to recover their strengths and weaknesses. . . [and ultimately] to provide students with the skills and courage they will need in order to transform the world according to their own vision.
>
> (Fitzclarence & Giroux 1984, pp. 24–5)

The point needs to be emphasised that critical reflection upon the experience and practices of schooling, and the part played in education by administrators, teachers and pupils, means more than simply seeking what is negative in traditionally accepted conceptions of education. It also means searching for the positive possibilities or elements and 'reworking them, contesting the terrains on which they develop, and appropriating from them whatever radical potentialities they might contain' (Fitzclarence & Giroux 1984, p. 27). It is in this search for the positive that is contained, often deeply submerged, in existing approaches to

schooling that themes such as equality and democracy, which historically have dominated educational reform and thinking, are likely to re-emerge in ways which illustrate the contradictions between the promise and the reality of schooling.

Equality and democracy in socially responsible schooling

Although, historically, equality has been taken extremely seriously in public education, the record of schools in contributing to a more equitable society has been dismal. This is largely because, although schools themselves may be committed to equality, they have hardly practised it. They have usually been characterised by hierarchical learning styles, individualism and competition. Moreover, schools exist in a society which is characterised by competition and is committed to the market. This paradox partially explains the emphasis in schools on a limited and distorted conception of individual equality of opportunity – a conception which, in line with the predominant market orientation of society, fosters competition for educational commodities and credentials which may help to secure or improve individual social and economic position. In this way schools, while preaching equality, may instead 'reinforce political, cultural, social and economic inequality' because they largely 'support and legitimate the dominant culture, social and economic order' (Wood 1984, p. 224). In exposing the limited opportunities for genuine equality in education, educators, pupils and parents might begin to consider curricular and organisational reforms in schools which might lead to more genuine equality within them. Such a focus would also raise the concept of equality as an important educational and social issue.

The issue of democracy in education is also only partially developed in traditional approaches to education. Wood explains the contradiction between promise and practice:

> The promise is that of educating the children of our society in ways that will aid in their development as literate, thoughtful, and perhaps even compassionate democratic citizens. The reality is schooling which emphasizes the routine, rewards rule-governed behaviour, and values conformity over independence in reflecting our limited conception of democracy.
>
> (Wood 1984, p. 219)

This contradiction is itself rooted in a contradictary notion of democracy. On the one hand, democracy is associated with equality before the law, equal freedoms, equal rights and responsibilities and equal franchise. On the other hand, democracy also ensures

the unfettered pursuit of personal gains, competitive economic advancement, and the preservation and extension of self-interest (within the law) over public interests. Thus, while schools doubtless contribute to the production of a differentially socialised and stratified workforce for a hierarchical and occupational structure, they must at the same time provide experiences that ensure the continuation of perceptions of bourgeois democratic society. They manage to do this by offering the illusion of equality of access for all children (Shapiro 1983, 1984).

But the perception of democracy that historically has been reinforced in schools is an extremely limited one of citizen participation through the ballot-box but otherwise, in general, one of disinterest. Moreover, schools, in their organisation and practices, usually offer few opportunities for democratic participation in any full sense. Such genuine democratic participation in schools or in the wider society would require, according to Wood, three conditions:

> first, the participants must be in the position of decision maker rather than decision influencer; second, all participants must be in possession of, or have access to, the requisite information on which decisions can be reached; and third, full participation requires equal power on the part of participants to determine the outcomes of decisions.
>
> (Wood 1984, p. 232)

Such participation should be encouraged amongst school staffs, school communities and, importantly, amongst students as much as possible. This is, indeed, currently recommended in Victoria according to the Victorian *Ministerial Papers* (Education Department of Victoria 1983, 1984). 'The School Improvement Plan' (Ministerial Paper, No. 2), for instance, has as one of its aims:

> To encourage and support collaborative practices between parents, students and teachers in schools, and between schools and the rest of the system.
>
> (Education Department of Victoria 1983, p. 6)

Moreover, apparent in the School Improvement Plan is the realisation that 'the structure of the School Improvement Plan must reflect its own principles of participation and co-operation' (Education Department of Victoria 1983, p. 6). This is an important realisation because it recognises that schools cannot genuinely contribute to the development of participatary democracy if their actions are inconsistent with that ideal. For, as is stated elsewhere in the Victorian *Ministerial Papers*:

> Unless the school is a place where significant decisions are made, it cannot provide a model which will assist in preparing young people for a life in a democratic community.
>
> (Education Department of Victoria 1984, p. 9)

It is through such a process of participation and communication that the social responsibility of teachers, parents and pupils might be developed and strengthened.

Even in the state of Victoria, however, some tension remains between an education structure that has historically been geared for systems efficiency, and its promise of collaborative participation and local control (Angus, 1984). In contrast to traditional top-down approaches which translate centrally determined policies into practice, bottom-up approaches:

> would concentrate on each school's determining its own agenda, monitoring and evaluating itself, and using district funds in the manner that staff and parents (and also students) chose. . . the bottom-up strategy concentrates on generating among staff a shared vision of what the school might be, creating a team spirit, cultivating mutual trust, and building emotional bonds through collaborative decisionmaking on school issues.
>
> (Cuban 1984, p. 139)

But such realisations are merely the starting point for genuine school reform. What is most important about such democratic participation is not merely that it may result in better decisions and greater commitment to those decisions, nor even that it stimulates greater democratic awareness and commitment to participation in a broader social sense. It is most important because such genuine participation can raise for scrutiny a host of issues that are left dormant under the formerly accepted bureaucratic rationality. These include issues of relevance, justice, cultural discrimination in schools, and the connections between education and society, economics and politics. Moreover, in collectively challenging the 'taken for granted' in education a number of important questions may be raised in relation to these issues, such as: What counts as education? What counts as knowledge? Whose interests are served or restricted by the selection, production and distribution of such knowledge? What aspects of society and economy are legitimated by forms of schooling? What kind of society do we want? How might schools contribute to the formation of such a society?

Such critical questioning does not come easily or readily to us because we have been so thoroughly socialised into bureaucratic rationality (Rizvi, in print). This is precisely why experience in

collaborative democracy in schools and school communities is important: participation is itself educative as participants learn to contribute to dialogue over issues that are problematic. The critical movement from critique to change may come when it becomes clear to participants that current social arrangements, and the relationships between school and society, are neither neutral nor natural. At that point, as Gordon explains:

> The question is whether we, as educators, intend education for citizenship simply to function as a mode of ideological domination, conforming students to the demands of dominant society; or whether citizenship education should be designed to foster social reconstruction, by helping students (and others) to become creative, critical thinkers and active social participants, and to become capable of redefining the nature of their own lives in the society in which they live.
>
> (Gordon 1985, p. 2)

This would involve analysis not only of schooling in its social and political context, but also of the message systems of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation through which the dominant social order is served (Bernstein 1977).

In the classroom, such socially responsible education would involve helping students to develop 'the intellectual wherewithal to criticize, reconstruct, or reform the society they will enter as adults' (Finkelstein 1984, p. 277). In teaching literacy, therefore, teachers might consider the approach which connects the skills of literacy with cultural and political emancipation, so that students are taught not merely to master the techniques of reading but to 'read' the world critically. As Tickell explains:

> if we are teaching *literacy*, and not [merely] ciphering and deciphering, we must be teaching politics. We must be concerned with the *content* of our teaching. . . If language does not address all of those dimensions of the personality, and does not help the learner deal with all of those aspects of experience, then it is not developing the person as an autonomous individual, it is developing the person selectively according to someone's priorities. Secondly, it gives us a direction, a purpose, for whatever techniques are required for the learner. If we don't consider the purpose, the use to which those techniques are to be put, then we are not developing a process for liberation, we are developing a process for domestication.
>
> (Tickell 1981, p. 6)

Students would be educated to be alert to and mindful of social conditions, 'to look at things as if they could be otherwise, to envisage alternative realities' (Greene 1984, p. 294) and to strive to achieve them.

Such constructive critique of existing practice is of crucial importance in education for social and civic responsibility. It does not, as Simon (1983) and Willis (1977) warn us, however, remove:

> the old dilemma of what to do on Monday morning . . . Individual students face an uncertain job market and quite often are ill-prepared to cope with its 'realities'. We have responsibilities to these students. If we do not give youth a sense of how to 'make it' within the system, all too often we doom them to social marginality. We fall into yet another high-minded way of perpetuating the structural inequalities in society.
>
> (Simon 1983, p. 244)

Teachers need to help students to understand about society and employment, and about getting jobs and operating within society as responsible citizens. At the same time students would be conscious of ways in which society might be reformed and how responsible citizens would participate in such reforms. In short, as Simon summarises this conception of responsible education:

> I want to be straightforward; what I have in mind is a version of education that includes real social and technical competence, but as well a critical social intelligence that refuses to let questions of compassion and justice be suppressed by the concerns of technique and efficiency.
>
> (Simon 1983, p. 246)

In such an education the 'basics' are not simply technical competencies of literacy and numeracy, but standards of respect for fellow human beings, of justice, democracy, equality and emancipation. And if teachers, administrators and school communities are to be socially responsible, they must be primarily concerned with such issues, and with the self-awareness that leads to social questioning, rather than with the regulation, control and mystification that traditional, predominantly hierarchical schooling currently entrenches.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this essay has been to contest the widely accepted notion that the management of resources in schools involves merely strategic decisions about the deployment of finances, staff and materials. Decisions about education involve *cultural choices* and questions of value, but because of the pervasive acceptance of the ideology of meritocracy in schools, such choices are generally not regarded as problematic. They are regarded, in a sense, as not properly significant choices at all but merely as options for effective administration from within a fairly uniform and taken-for-granted social and cultural perspective. Moreover, the

myth that even material educational resources can be managed in a value-free manner, one which serves no vested interests but merely contributes to the common good of society, is entrenched in the fetish of educational administrators for concerns simply of effectiveness and efficiency. Not only the management of educational resources, but also the management of education itself and of educational outcomes, is seen in restricted managerial terms. Educational administration and, specifically, the management of resources in schools, is reduced to a technology of control (Bates 1983). Moreover, it is a technology of control that reflects, legitimates and entrenches the social and economic inequalities of the wider society.

The essay began with a discussion of the traditionally accepted role of education in society. This role, in which liberal notions of social harmony and equality of opportunity are paramount, was seen to be given ideological and theoretical sustenance by the dominant social theory of structural functionalism. Educational administration, strongly rooted in systems theory, reinforces the prevailing message that education contributes to social order and, through the selection mechanisms of the meritocracy, to social efficiency, progress and material wealth. The possibility that such a benign view of social reality, a view which is defined and legitimated in schools, is not in the interest of all members of society was raised by Greenfield's conception of schools as cultural sites. Regarded as such, schools can be seen as places in which cultural discrimination is inflicted upon those children whose own cultural dispositions are not compatible with the institutionalised culture of schooling.

Such an alternative, cultural perspective on schools as organisations, it was argued, is completely overlooked by proponents of the school effectiveness movement. In the 'effectiveness' literature, culture, if it is considered at all, is presented merely as a reified ideal, as an 'elaboration of socially integrating myths. . . [that] will contribute to the unified sense of mission and therefore to the harmony of the whole [organisation]' (Selzynick, in Duignan 1985, p. 2). But such a view of culture is a mystification. It is an artificial, deceptive construct which ignores cultural discrimination in schools by encouraging a veil of unity in relation to a limited notion of 'effectiveness' and a distorted concept of 'excellence'. The school effectiveness movement ignores the social and political context of schools and, through emphasis upon superficial managerial matters, teaches pupils to strive for success within the status quo and to accept their positions if they fail.

The American educational reports and, less stridently and uncompromisingly, a number of Australian education reports, echo the themes of 'school effectiveness' and, in their concern for 'standards', prescribed curricula and ever tighter linkages between education and industry, signal what Skilbeck calls a 'retreat from education'. I have argued in the final section of this essay that such a retreat may be halted by the extension of gains in education that were made, in limited and contradictory ways, during earlier reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. Such gains recognise schools as cultural sites, and they would be extended to encourage responsible educators to explore more critically in schools the connections between school and society, and to give prominence to educational and cultural concerns in resource management rather than to concerns of instrumental administrative efficiency.

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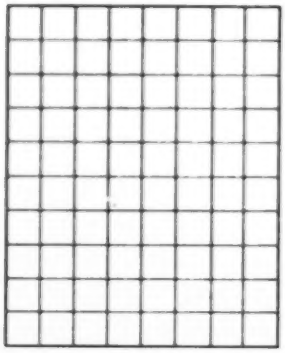
Readings



1 Education and change in South Australia

Malcolm Skilbeck

Source: Malcolm Skilbeck, 'Education and change in South Australia', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1978, pp. 99-110.

Publication of a major state report whose interest lies primarily in its proposals for the recentralization of school curriculum is a sign of the transformation that is occurring in several parts of the world. What the Keeves Report, *Education and Change in South Australia*, says on this subject has already provoked a strong, critical reaction in parts of the Australian education community, not least from the teachers associations. But it is not only the curriculum analysis which has great topical interest. Set against the Keeves Committee's views on (1) the nature of social change, (2) the professional roles of teachers, and (3) the scope and functions of the state education bureaucracy, the proposals for concentration of curriculum power within that bureaucracy and very largely at state, not regional or local, level may be seen as a determined attempt to recentralize authority for education generally. The Report is an unusual example of sustained examination of curriculum policy and administration, prepared at a time of economic if not social crisis in a State until recently identified with optimism and innovation. By its uncompromising stand on the key question of where authority in a state system might best lie, it raises fundamental questions about public sector control, which take it well beyond the milieu of South Australian education.

STABILITY OR CHANGE IN STATE SYSTEMS?

Changes in structure, functions, organization—and personnel—have been a notable feature over the past decade in the state education departments in Australia. Opinions are divided, at present, as to whether these changes are heralding a fundamental shift, or whether—a more widely held view especially among the bureaucrats themselves—what is occurring is no more than a further unremarkable phase in the evolution of the hundred-year-old systems. Alongside these changes, the non-government sector of education is flourishing in a manner that is raising doubts in some minds about the future status of government-provided schools and the systems controlling them.

Despite such convulsions in recent years as the shake-out of top management in Victoria, the establishment of an education commission in New South Wales, and the move in several States towards such functional groupings as 'curriculum' and 'schools' in place of the old primary and secondary divisions, only the wilder or more optimistic prophets speak confidently of revolution in these conservative days. Consolidation in structures and caution in policy seem better fitted to low population growth, financial stringency, and the retreat from education (but not industrial training) as a major item on the political agenda.

Nevertheless the bureaucracies are changing. Fading—at least in some quarters—is the old image of the patient climbers of ladders governing the far-

flung reaches of the States from their perches in state capital head offices, and there are genuinely new things. Not the least of these new things is accountability in the form of determination by some of the politicians and leading administrators to review, evaluate, and modify their edifices. Evidence of this is to be found in most, if not quite all, of the state departments. The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia is but the latest in a long line of reviews and reports, whose very existence testifies to a healthy self-criticism and readiness to think and think again about how best to articulate a state system and manage its affairs. What is most refreshing about these Australian reviews is the combination of open-minded and thoroughly professional assessments of past practice with a willingness to consider wide-ranging changes in policy as well as practice. Whatever the fate of their specific recommendations—and to say there has been as much as ten per cent implementation would be generous—these reports constitute a body of informed description, analysis, and futures-oriented planning that it would be hard to match in other systems of comparable size and character around the world.

THE REPORT AND THE REPORTING SYSTEM

The South Australian Report is the final statement from the Committee (an interim report was published in February 1981). The Committee Chairman is the noted researcher and part-architect of the studies for the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, John Keeves, who is Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research and one of Australia's most careful and painstaking empiricists. The Report is a testimony not only to the self-reflectiveness of the state system but to that version of the empirical method wherein every corner is looked into and swept out and possibilities for future action weighed, assessed, and interrelated in a tightly knit system. Indeed, were the South Australian Department to follow the Committee's comments, advice, admonitions, and detailed prescriptions, it would achieve an internal order and consistency and such a degree of meticulous organization beyond the fantasies of even the most diligent of bureaucrats.

Many readers of the Report will feel that there is no prospect of such implementation in sight. First, the teachers and their unions won't like it. Second, we may be fairly confident that the response of the Department's middle ranks will be to mass all their very considerable power and talent for finding loopholes in changes proposed against any moves senior management may wish to make to upset the status quo! Third, it is genuinely radical, educationally.

It is one of the paradoxes of the movement for reform by official reports that the detailed appraisal of recommendations rests heavily on the very people who are most likely affected; that is, shaken up. Realization of this is one of the factors leading to an increasing questioning of the Westminster system itself, a system which has had among its (unanticipated?) consequences the solidifying of middle-level bureaucratic structures and the strengthening of power bases in the public sector.

What Keeves and his colleagues have done is to show how these bureaucratic structures are working and to disclose something of the disposition of power

within them. Behind their analyses and recommendations lies a wealth of detail on 'the system'. The fascination of this Report is its truthfulness—the powerful glimpses we gain of an educational system in action, the forces and counter-forces operating within it, and—inadvertently perhaps on the authors' part—the clash of ideologies and values in fundamental aspects of the contemporary education scene.

It is a tribute to the Committee that their Report yields so much and I hope that neither they nor the Department will take it amiss when I say that what this document shows, to those who care to see them, are many of the dilemmas, paradoxes, and plain shortcomings both of the Education Department itself and of this method of trying to set its affairs aright.

The Report, then, promises much. It should be on the compulsory reading list not only of all analysts of Australian education but of those administrators and policy makers who have the task of making state systems work as well in their second century as in their first.

The Report is comprehensive, detailed, and methodical in its description and analysis of state education at the levels of schooling and, to a lesser extent, teacher education. One expects nothing less from its principal author. In its assumptions and formulations of educational philosophy and policy, however, caution is at times thrown to the winds and we are presented with ideas and recommendations that ought, at least, to excite lively and widespread debate before any steps are taken to build them into the state system. It is as if, every so often, the careful veils of data are flung aside to reveal within the tabernacle the articles of the true faith. These are the articles of an unyielding creed: the Committee really does believe that the Education Department ought and can, in the eighties, assert an authority and control over schools that, for well over a decade, it has allowed to slip away—or could not prevent from doing so.

Education and Change in South Australia commences with a resumé of the findings of the Committee's first Report. Fascinating here is the discussion of reactions to that Report; and it is a matter of wonder to observe Keeves in fine headmasterly fashion putting down the critics, the heretics, and the disbelievers. Even that doyen of Australian educators, Peter Karmel, is reproved for being in gross error in his 1971 forecast of educational expansion (a forecast that helped to revitalize Australian education). Again 'the perception and understanding of the current educational climate' of some of those appearing before the Committee is challenged. Why is this? Because they are not seeing that 'change' in the eighties entails contraction and, in some respects, decline of a system accustomed to expansion and growth. Essentially the thrust of the first Report of the Committee was that the system as it stood, with roughly its present or a reduced level of overall funding, was adequate. What is needed is greater intensification of effort, better organization, more productivity, higher levels of efficiency, and a readiness to bend and respond according to new community pressures and political priorities. For this scenario, optimists and expansionists like Karmel and sceptics from within, like state department officers, are seen as irrelevant. Since they cannot quite be ignored, however, they have to be firmly put down.

Despite the somewhat dusty reception given to its first Report, the Committee was convinced that it was broadly on the right lines. They proceed, in the

final Report, to indicate precisely what is meant by the concentration and consolidation of a state system in the eighties and the fine tuning of its priorities and procedures in accordance with prevailing ideological and economic climates.

THREE THEMES: CHANGE; PROFESSIONALISM; THE ROLE OF THE STATE

In addressing the final Report, I want to concentrate on three of its leading themes: The pattern of relationship of educational to other forms of social and cultural change; teacher professionalism and ways of supporting and enhancing it; the roles and functions of a state department in an increasingly plural (i.e. government/non government schools) system.

While this selection will mean overlooking some very interesting and valuable discussions, on such topics as student assessment and school evaluation, the needs of minorities, and community roles in schooling, it does take us into some of the key areas of the educational debate of the eighties. More concretely, these three themes enable me to address the question: How satisfactory is this Report as a response to its very challenging major terms of reference. These terms required the Committee to identify economic, demographic, technological, and social influences on the educational system of the State, to consider their implications for resource allocations and to advise on resource priorities and effective uses of resources, to advise on the organization and possible rationalization of the Education Department, the Department of Further Education, and Childhood Services, to assess the means whereby school and college curricula could be changed to meet new technologies and changing employment patterns, and finally to consider possible new ways of evaluating the effectiveness of schools and colleges.

Nothing if not wide, these terms of reference nevertheless show the utilitarian flavour of the contemporary politico-bureaucratic style in education: how can schooling become more effective, efficient and responsive to the unmistakable economic-sociocultural trends of our time? The short answer that Keeves and his Committee give is: by maintaining the status quo structurally and organizationally while concentrating all available energies on better—that is, tighter and more controlled—organization, including a substantial increase in the direction, from the centre, of the teaching force. It is in this sense, of a concentration of power within a closely articulated hierarchy from local to regional to state level, that the concept of recentralization is a crucial one for understanding the Report. Let us see how all this applies in each of the three major areas mentioned above.

CHANGE

First, has the Committee adequately identified economic, demographic, technological, and social changes and, equally important, how has it considered the nexus between these forces and education, itself properly to be regarded in the modern state, not as a dependent variable or recessive factor but as one of the principal dimensions of society, the economy, and indeed culture? This, of course, is not quite how the prevailing ideology of the contem-

porary conservative alliance of politicians and bureaucrats (or, for that matter, the militant left) sees matters and it has to be said straight away that the Keeves Committee has allowed itself to be thoroughly ensnared by this part of its terms of reference. It neither had the resources (time, funding, expertise) to carry out anything resembling a comprehensive study of society in South Australia; nor has it been quick enough to perceive that its own naive, classical, empirical model of 'education reflects society' is hopelessly inadequate for either explanatory or policy-making purposes. In passing, the same point could be made about neo-Marxist reflex models, but no one will make the mistake of detecting a neo-Marxist whiff in this Report except in the authoritarianism that it shares with some members of the Marxist school of educational reformers.

On the first point mentioned above, the condition of society and the nature of social order in South Australia, the Committee rightly sounds notes of warning or alarm about the precarious economy—and the Australian economy as a whole has become more precarious, even in the short time since the Report was published. Furthermore, it very reasonably argues for educators to acquire more knowledge and understanding of economic factors, to face economic facts, and to cast their policy analyses into recognizable economic frameworks. However, there is no sustained analysis of the economy: indeed only a chapter on technological change and that touching on a limited set of technological forces. Moreover, the question as to the nature, trends, dynamic forces and possible futures of South Australian society is never tackled, save for passing references and—more dangerous—the occasional surfacing of a set of assumptions which are never examined or justified.

In respect of social change, the Karmel Report of 1971 in South Australia and the more notable national Report by Karmel (1973) and his colleagues that led to the establishment of the Schools Commission, afford a striking contrast to the Keeves Report, as does the Tasmanian Report, *Tasmanian Education in the Next Decade* (TEND, 1978), to say nothing of such masterly studies as those of the Henderson (1976) Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. In all of these documents, social factors are not reduced to the unexamined economic ideology of the right; nor do they neglect to undertake sustained, if highly controversial, analyses and interpretations of the dynamics of Australian culture. Lacking such a thrust, and accepting without question the economic philosophy of the new right, the Keeves Report is unable to present either a rationale for its own ideology or a convincing analysis of social change in South Australia.

It is at least arguable that one of the major sociocultural purposes (as distinct from functions) of schooling in South Australia in the 1980s is to stimulate and foster statewide thinking about the nature of the social order, new patterns of economic growth, ways of developing the people as well as the physical resources of the State, and developing an internationally minded, artistically rich, community-oriented culture. All of these, and other themes, are part of the culture of analysis, reflection—and dissent—in contemporary Australia, but they are not caught within the Committee's empirical net.

Might all this, for a cost-conscious government, sound a little too like the Karmel flair of the seventies? The Committee has missed a great opportunity here, since in its anxiety to get 'correct' administrative, functional, and

organizational solutions, and perhaps unconsciously to load the then Minister's guns for him, it has overlooked its responsibility to stimulate debate and dialogue—a genuine interchange of ideas—about possible futures.

This quest for closure is, alas, a failing that the story of state education in its first century in Australia has writ large. One of the most dramatic struggles in the history of state education has been, indeed, that between the mechanics of pinch-penny bureaucracy and the practically minded indealists who from time to time, reach the top. (The point is perfectly illustrated by Selleck (1982) in his life of Victoria's notable Director-General, Frank Tate.) It has to be recorded that, in its social analysis, the Keeves Committee maintains all too well a striking continuity with the past; or, more precisely, the Committee has turned to the past for inspiration instead of trying to come to grips with the forces that really are changing the world. Pleasing as their line seems to hard-pressed government ministers, it is tantamount to saying that the multifaceted, complex processes of sociocultural change in the State—so evident in the seventies—are a passing aberration and now we can return to the real business, whereby education 'processes' the requirements of the present social order, just as it is. Despite its apparent convenience, such a solution is, ultimately, of no more value to an intelligent and shrewd conservative regime than it would be to a reform-minded one. As the British experience amply and very painfully demonstrates, the implementation of conservative economics and social policy, these days, calls for drastic structural change at all levels of society. The Committee has not perceived this fundamental truth about life in the eighties. It seeks to restore a form of order by introducing controls (both in the way of intellectual analysis and a structure of action) which cannot come to terms with social dynamics.

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND PRESCRIPTIVE CURRICULA

The second consideration I want to address occupies the central part of the Committee's report. Seen from one standpoint, the Report in fact reads as an extended critique of the role of the teacher, combined with a large portfolio of proposals for structuring, revising, and strengthening—or, as some might say, containing—teacher professionalism. What this boils down to in practice is an elaborate and remarkably detailed set of specifications for the what and how of teaching. These specifications for teaching are something of a tour de force in Australian curriculum analysis and, for their boldness, precision, and thoroughness, as much as for their amazing tendentiousness, deserve the closest possible analysis by the curriculum fraternity internationally as well as within Australia.

However, the proposals are profoundly controversial and are likely to be dismissed by libertarian critics. Also I fear it is all too likely that, like most of the rest of the Report, these ideas will seep into the thirsty and capacious sands of the Education Department, to re-emerge, if ever, docketed if not decimated. It is true, they are not, in the sense of day-to-day administration, 'practical'. But they are a genuine challenge to the prevailing stance of school-based curriculum making, a rare example of frank, detailed, and well-articulated conservative curriculum ideology. In this respect they stand in stark contrast to the

Committee's timid and narrow appraisal of social change in South Australia. Indeed it is this section of the Report that lifts it from mediocrity to the heights of intellectual and moral concern. School-based curriculum development, if not altogether a devil to be vanquished, is a disorder from whose deathly clutch the State's education must be wrenched, and the Committee proposes to show us just how this feat is to be achieved.

The line of argument proceeds—somewhat prosaically it must be admitted—from a reminder that, 30 or so years ago, a South Australian Committee had recommended a compulsory common curriculum, to the claim that current school-based curriculum development has failed, then on to the view that the State's mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing curricula are inadequate, and finally into the heartland, where the need for prescriptive, statewide curriculum making is declared.

Much of the Report is given over to careful explications and justifications of the particular model of prescribed, compulsory ('recommended') statewide curriculum that is proposed. In essence, this is a model of state-defined, sequentially organized, subject-based learning, articulated through four so-called core areas, namely English language; natural science; mathematics; social learning. These, of course, are mainly the familiar basics, presented here as 'the foundations of learning'. For each of these subject areas, 'recommended courses of instruction' are to be developed. Similarly, for a second division of so-called 'experiential learnings' (health and physical education; moral reasoning and action; value and belief systems; arts and crafts; work, leisure, and life skills) recommended courses are to be developed by the Education Department. This pattern, of a principal set of four 'foundation' areas accompanied by a subsidiary set of four 'experiential' ones, is to be followed throughout the whole of schooling, primary and secondary. Provision is also to be made for some—but not much—optional work. In the primary school, each area is allocated roughly equal time, whereas, in the secondary school, the foundation areas attract two-thirds of the timetable while the experiential areas must make do with one-third.

Readers familiar with the publication of the late-lamented Curriculum Development Centre, *A Core Curriculum for Australian Schools*, will recognize in these eight areas the areas of knowledge and experience from which CDC suggested that schools (not education departments) might consider constructing core curricula relevant to their students' ascertained needs, concerns, and interests. Also recognizable is the Centre's emphasis on defining core curriculum with equal concern for learning processes as for areas of knowledge and experience.

But here the resemblance with the CDC proposals ends. The Keeves Report is a strikingly reductionist argument about the CDC core proposal since it (1) effectively reduces or, as I should say, distorts a philosophy of core as general education for all to imposed syllabuses in 'foundation subjects' made familiar under the back-to-basics banner; (2) dismisses the school and hence the teaching profession as a central agent in curriculum making; (3) surrounds the core with a detailed apparatus of committees, review bodies, and monitoring and evaluation procedures of such elaborateness as to bring into question the

ability or willingness of a school to avail itself of those opportunities for initiative which are carefully inserted into the overal scheme. These differences are real and substantial, demonstrating yet again that core curriculum analysis is one of the sharpest and most dangerous of all the two-edged weapons in contemporary educational discourse.

Yet, despite some criticism of the CDC scheme, the Keeves Committee still feels that its proposals are broadly in line with the Centre's views on core. As one who played some part in the Australian core-curriculum enterprise of the late seventies, listened to numerous criticisms of the CDC core proposals from the educational left and right, and attempted to refine the concept and elaborate the theory in the light of the debate, I cannot see anything but the most superficial, misleading, and damaging similarity. Thus I am brought to admit that—to extend the military metaphor—core-curriculum analysis, like an early cannon, is as likely to blow up in the faces of the gun crew as to lob shorts effectively into the field of action. The Keeves Committee has indeed confirmed the misgivings of the educational left, that core curriculum of a particular ilk can be brought into service as a major element in a program of recentralization of state power.

For those who are still prepared to see value in the concept of core, notwithstanding the risks and conceding the concerns of the left, the Keeves Report is a fascinating and serious attempt to work things out in terms of statewide curriculum making. This, truly, is what core could look like in the hands of conservative politicians and bureaucrats bent on putting the teachers in their places. For those who are apprehensive at this prospect, as I am, comfort may be taken from the thought that the truly byzantine structures proposed by the Keeves Committee for designing, making, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing, and generally controlling the curriculum process would be beyond the wit and capacity of even the most fiercely determined state-wide bureaucratic machine to implement. Their particular gunship is so top-heavy with weaponry that it will capsize at the first stiff breeze! Like the CDC's own discussion paper on core, the Committee's proposals are far more likely to serve as a catalyst for thought and critical inquiry than provide any kind of blueprint for action. For this we may be grateful.

The curriculum system of the State is no longer containable through rigid structures and, once again, it has to be said that the Committee missed a golden opportunity in substituting prescriptive curriculum making for an extended analysis of how to foster, enhance, sustain, and generally propagate teacher professionalism. It is curriculum structuring through the work of the teaching profession, and aided by broad policy guidelines, that will provide us with the order we need. Readers might refer back to another recent report, which enjoys the not entirely uncommon distinction of having had none of its major recommendations formally accepted by its sponsoring government, namely the National Inquiry into Teacher Education. That Report has the fundamental merit of centring the qualitative improvement of the educational system, not in the machinery of state, but in the intensive, prolonged education and self-education of the teacher—a point which the South Australian Committee acknowledges but does not consider as a genuine alternative to big or cumbersome government.

STATE ROLES IN SCHOOLING

I turn now to what is potentially the most important if the most elusive theme of this Report. This is the question of how far and in what manner South Australia should develop its policy-making, organizational, administrative, and accountability apparatus in order to fulfil its responsibilities for public schooling.

First, readers are entitled to ask whether this is a genuine question, since the Committee itself never directly addresses it in that form, even though the terms of reference of the enquiry clearly permit and may even require the asking of such a question. There is no doubt, though, that the Committee had the question somewhere in mind, since what it proposes is a very definite and quite massive set of bureaucratic structures. What the Committee has done with the Education Department is essentially the same as what it has done with the economic, social, and cultural and even technological order: it has accepted everything very largely as it is, and has entered future scenarios only in so far as these are extrapolations of very visible trends. As for the Education Department, its 'trend', under urgent political whipping, is towards increased central direction, enlarged influence, greater efficiency, more accountability, a more weighty looking bureaucracy, and a lower budget. Everything that is said about the role of the Department falls somewhere into this catalogue.

It is a curious paradox of conservative politics that, while its rhetoric is stridently hostile to enlarged government, secrecy of government, abridgement of individual rights, and bigger welfare budgets, its performance results in more heavy-handed—not to say elephantine—government, bigger welfare budgets, more secrecy or evasiveness by the bureaucracy, a general lowering of efficiency (and possibly also of the great unquantifiable, human happiness), and a constraining of liberal, humanistic values. We are always promised that these are but rites of passage, the society cleansing itself in readiness for some higher stage in its evolution.

Perhaps it is, after all, time to ask another, more liberal set of questions: whether, in order for a society to have satisfactory public schooling, we need large state education departments to administer, supervise, and generally badger these schools; whether an increased investment in teachers and their education does not make better financial as well as educational sense than the creation of new divisions of public servants, the election of committees, and the construction of local, regional, and statewide networks for review, inspection, assessment, and other kinds of docketing and directing. Plainly the very detailed prescriptions which constitute the answers given to these questions by the Keeves Committee amount to thumbs down to liberal humanistic values, open structures, and greater freedom and professional responsibility for teachers. Is this because we cannot, ultimately, trust teachers, or is it because teachers themselves would do better and feel better as cogs in a vast administrative machine?

CAN TEACHERS BE FREE AND EXCELLENT?

The Keeves Committee avers that teachers want more direction: their belief is that good quality education and excellence of teaching are not consistent with

what they see as a loose disorder of ideas and practice. That direction is provided, with a vengeance, in a Report which is probably unparalleled in recent Australian educational history for the detail with which many aspects of the functioning of a state department are scrutinized and re-ordered. This in itself is a powerful contribution to educational analysis and will repay the closest study by educational administrators. Yet Australian education need not be entirely a captive of its own past, as the Report seems to believe it must be, nor should it be thrown off the adventurous and innovative courses it began to explore in the seventies by professional difficulties arising, or the fear and venom of the conservative critics.

On the issue of whether to build up or seek ways to scale down the large, directive bureaucracies that are part of the Australian heritage, it is instructive to note that the non-government sector in Australia is already so large as to constitute a major, not a minor, alternative. It flourishes in the absence of the kind of bureaucracy that the State seems to feel the need for with its schools. It must be conceded, however, that non-government schools gain many benefits, and not only financial, from the existence of state bureaucracies.

Federal funding policies through the Schools Commission have dissolved the clear-cut distinction between private or independent and government schools: there are no fully independent schools any more—financially at any rate—and the state systems are not merely the providers of government schools. The implications of all this have yet to be faced by Australian state education departments, as has the question of whether it is both possible and desirable to dismantle large parts of the state apparatus of direction, monitoring, and control. Because it does not address this, and for other reasons already noted, the South Australian Committee is affirming 'education and the end to change' in South Australia, except for those changes that have some prospect of reversing the liberal, creative regime which flourished briefly and brilliantly, if dangerously, in the hey-day of the previous Director-General, Alby Jones, and has continued, under much more difficult circumstances, by the present incumbent, John Steinle.

Having outlined its view of excellence in educational affairs, the Committee in Platonic vein wishes to freeze the image. It was, by contrast, the Alby Jones Memorandum that signalled emergence from departmental restriction for the teaching force, and symbolized acceptance of such dangerous forces as growth, choice, and professional freedom. It is the contention of this Committee that freedom *from* did not result in freedom *for*. This is a crucial claim upon which a very large part of the argument of the whole Report rests. From a purely empirical standpoint, it is not sustained by evidence or argument but rests instead on that hard bed of faith—or perhaps lack of it—which ultimately generates the whole structure of ideas in this Report. Thus it is conceivable that the troubles from which South Australian state schools suffer are (1) a function of a complex of changes in South Australia (but this complex is not considered), (2) similar in kind to troubles in other systems not 'afflicted' with freedom (but no comparisons are drawn), (3) neither greater nor less than in the past (but the historical dimension is also lacking), (4) related causally to inadequacies in teacher in-service education and other means of professional support (but no relevant data are presented to enable us to confirm or reject such hypotheses).

The fascinating and highly contentious conclusion drawn by the Committee is that freedom *from* and *for* must now be replaced by that 'glorious freedom' which arises from a willing submission to a higher authority. An awesome responsibility would, as a consequence, fall on the Minister of Education and the Director-General of Education, were they to take the unusual step of actually implementing the recommendations of a major committee of enquiry.

Might it not be simpler, more consistent with our notions of professionalism as well as democratic relationships, and more in line with our liberal and humanistic tradition, to follow the alternative course of strengthening the teacher's role as educator? Nor is this inconsistent with the evolution of state education in Australia which has progressively—and often with considerable wisdom—enhanced the status of the teaching force and, over the years, strengthened its capacity to exercise responsible choice. To build further on the structures for professional freedom could have the added advantages of actually reducing the apparatus of state bureaucracy and avoiding those large, inflexible administrative structures, those interminable committee gatherings, that seem so ill-adapted to social, economic and cultural change—and are so expensive. We could even move to establish an open style of core curriculum, through guidelines, state-sponsored inservice, and curriculum reviews. Is it really the case that a higher professionalism is beyond the capacity of our teachers, and that deftness, lightness of touch, and intellectual and moral leadership in our senior administrators have to be replaced by all this machinery?

It is the final paradox of this Report that, more effectively than any other in recent years, it focuses our attention on some of the most important issues in the general direction and management of state education. Perhaps it takes such a serious, thoroughgoing, and searching presentation of the case for a return to a certain kind of order, structure, and direction to illuminate these issues. It is for this reason, not for its value as a guide to others, that this Report is a milestone in Australian education and essential, if disquieting, reading.

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High school reform: A critique and a broader construct of social reality

C. C. Yeakey & G. S. Johnston

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The values we bring . . . to right the situation are precisely the ones that got us in trouble in the first place and are . . . likely to perpetuate our grief.
—M. Greenfield

In 1983 public concern about the nation's future created a tidal wave of reports that sought to reform America's schools. In April 1983, ***A Nation at Risk***, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE), brought the issue of schooling to the forefront of political debate and controversy. The general message was clear—American public schooling is in a poor state of affairs. Subsequent commission reports and related work[1] may have been superfluous after the NCEE presented its findings. Nevertheless, a summary sampling of the collective evidence (from Smith, 1983: 7-8; Hogg, 1983: 82) is sobering.

- American students rank behind those of other industrialized nations in science literacy.
- American students take relatively few science and mathematics courses because either they elect to take few or many schools offer only a few. In Western Europe, the Soviet Union, and Japan students complete more courses and have higher rates of performance.

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- The critical thinking skills of American students are minimal; many students cannot read, and nonacademic subjects are allowed to count the same as English, mathematics, science, and history in many students' programs

The findings of the reform reports should come as no great surprise, given that commission reports over the past 80 years or more reveal similar recurring themes (Passow, 1984). Yet, the larger community response in America was almost deafening in its unanimity and support from various sectors -businesses and corporations, postsecondary institutions, philanthropic foundations, state legislatures, the press and broadcast media, parents, teachers, and students (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). The public has been mainly unstinting in its support for educational reforms, which many perceive will not only raise academic standards but also enhance America's productivity and ensure world market dominance. Skeptics, however, are unsure if such an unqualified response is warranted. Some question the assumed cause-and-effect relationship between schooling and market dominance and/or industrial productivity. Others raise issues of a broader nature—whether school achievement or the lack thereof can serve as either the cure or the cause for the social, political, and economic dilemmas in which America finds itself.

After a critique of certain specific assertions and recommendations in the reports, this article will turn to the larger questions of the nature and function of schooling in American society, in an attempt to bring to the consideration of the national reform reports a broader construct of social reality.

A CRITIQUE

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Although one cannot deny the seriousness of the observations published in the national reform reports, neither can one deny the simplistically conservative analysis and the myopia of their proposed solutions. The reports err in comparing the outcomes of learning in the United States with those of highly industrialized countries in Western Europe. Such an assessment fails to recognize fundamental differences between highly dissimilar school systems. The United States differs from Europe and Japan in the basic structure of its formal system of schooling;

European and Japanese secondary schools have historically prepared a small elite. For example, in the mid-1960s only 9% of the relevant age group in Germany graduated from upper secondary school, compared to 75% in the United States (Husen, 1983).

America is unique in providing access to both the universal high school as well as expanded access to postsecondary schooling. In most other highly industrialized nations, entry into secondary school is determined by rigorous examinations, and few students go to an academic secondary school without the intent of further matriculation at a university (Slavin, 1983); students who are not college bound go to trade or technical schools or to work. The NCEE, thus, distorts the issue of comparative achievement by contrasting systems that are highly distinct.

A more telling comparison would be to examine the proportion of students in academic secondary schools in relevant age groups in the respective countries. We would soon discover that in the selective systems of Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union, the standard of elitism is bought at the price of more limited opportunities for the majority. Whether larger societal costs are worth such a price is another question.

To take our argument one step further, it is highly probable that the average high school student in Brazil or Nigeria also outperforms the average U.S. high school student because such countries use selection procedures more akin to those in Europe. This does not mean that America's system of universal high school education is a bad idea, only that a commitment to a high school education for everyone will unavoidably have a negative effect on the average achievement of high school students even if (as is almost certainly the case) it has a positive effect on the educational level of the general populace.

TIME AND CURRICULUM

One of the more radical recommendations made in *A Nation at Risk* is that the school day should be lengthened to 7 hours and the school year to 200 or more days. Yet, with few exceptions, research has failed to find that school districts having longer school days or school years evidence greater achievement than other districts, after controlling for other district characteristics (Levin, 1984). The NCEE made the recommendations in view of the fact that, given low quality, a longer school day or school year will do more harm than good, and that without substantial improvements in pedagogy, proposed curricular changes (more rigorous mathematics, science, social studies, and English requirements) may simply increase the high school dropout rate

(Goodlad, 1983). What is done with time has far greater influence on student achievement than does a marginal increase in the length of the school calendar.

Having noted the essential difference between quality and quantity of time, it is impossible to be against higher standards and more rigorous material, given the advancing technological age in which we live. Yet, increasing standards without increasing instructional effectiveness simply means that we are likely to fail more students at each level in the instructional sequence. Tighter standards would surely increase mean achievement scores by "washing out" low achievers, but the students who are "washed out" are unlikely to benefit from the process and must be accommodated by the school until their eventual denouement or by society at some later point. To provide inadequate instruction and then make students suffer by failing them is tantamount to blaming the victim.

Closely related to this point is the ill-conceived notion of making the educational experience, in both form and content, the same for all. It is as if a national curriculum is being embraced. The major thrust of such a curriculum is to reorient schools—the high schools in particular—to produce excellent graduates who are better qualified for college and who will, in turn, become college graduates who will eventually lead our nation into the industrial, scientific, and economic prominence we once enjoyed. The penchant for making schooling the same for all penalizes those individuals who lack both the aptitude and interest necessary for pursuing a college degree but who are more disposed to a vocational course of study

Herein lies the most serious shortcoming of most of the reports, namely, their blatant and callous disregard for the crises facing our enlarging group of educationally and economically disadvantaged students. In introductory ethics courses we are taught that the politics of omission are frequently more significant than the politics of commission. that the failure to include is as significant as the act of inclusion (Yeakey, 1983). If the reform reports are any indication, America is doomed to commit the errors of the past. If we do not incorporate this burgeoning group into a diversified agenda that accommodates them, they collectively will set an agenda of their own.

TECHNOLOGY

In tune with the rage for computer literacy, the NCEE recommended that a half year of computer science be required for all high school students. The computer revolution is upon us, but most people who will

ever see a computer probably will need to learn specific procedures, such as word processing, that may have nothing to do with programming and are taught best on the job. We would do well to keep in mind that computer science is not a basic skill on which other skills build. In the main, we should not rush too precipitously into heavy technical course requirements, for we might well force poor achievers out of school and/or create mediocre courses (Leonard, 1984). Of related importance is the fact that labor statistics reveal that high technology will have a net effect of lowering requisite job skills for most workers between now and 1990 (Leonard, 1984). Estimates suggest that there will be five times as many new jobs for fast-food workers and kitchen helpers as for computer programmers, with the largest number of new jobs in the next decade for secretaries (Parade, 1983). Computer-oriented jobs do not appear in the top 25 occupations that anticipate openings.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The NCEE suggests strategies designed to attract more qualified individuals into teaching and to retain the best of them. Except for a few caveats, one would be hard pressed to disagree with them (Slavin, 1983). First, merit pay should be based on student achievement above predicted levels, with the assurance that teachers with low-achieving classes have as good a chance to exceed expectations as teachers with high-achieving classes. Next, peer review in tandem with judgments of supervisors should be a part of the system. Finally, establishing a career ladder within classroom teaching might serve to increase pay, recognition, and status without rewarding outstanding teachers by promoting them out of the classroom.

FOCUSING ON THE HIGH SCHOOL

Both the Carnegie and NCEE reports largely focus on reforming the high school. It has become a common fallacy to emphasize high school reform without analyzing reform of the elementary feeder schools as well. By isolating schooling levels, we sever linkages that may be operationally distinct, but that are mutually sustaining and reinforcing on a systems level. Such a unidimensional analysis does not take into account the proposition that what a student accomplishes or fails to accomplish in the early schooling years will largely determine what he or she will accomplish in the succeeding high school years.

THE USE OF ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

The various reports appear to ask for a greater reliance on the very medium that has demonstrated marked unreliability: the standardized achievement test. Although such tests are constructed around the experiences and values of certain client groups, they have been used as insidious instruments of discrimination, mitigated only by affirmative action policies and sanctions imposed by the courts. How ironic that the national commissions are desirous of increasing the role of the tests, making them the absolute authority for promotion, graduation, admission, and evaluation, at the very time when our national leaders are lifting sanctions and thwarting the federal guidelines that serve to remediate the very problems the tests are designed to perpetuate. We cannot take comfort in the old myth that only ability matters in our highly competitive, highly achievement-oriented society, for the very high correlation between achievement and family income remains unaltered.

THE PLACE OF LANGUAGE

Simplistic if not jaundiced views are not endemic only to the Carnegie study or the NCEE. One sees threads of the same affliction in the Twentieth Century Fund report, which recommends that the federal government assert that English literacy is the most important objective for the schools and that bilingual funds be used to teach English to non-English speakers. This recommendation ignores both the cognitive and affective problems bilingual education attempts to address, as well as current policies based on legislation, judicial decisions, and research. It also fails to take into account the fact that the fastest-growing populations in our schools today and in the near future are among those persons for whom English is a second language. Statistics reveal that by 1990, minorities will constitute approximately 25% of the total U.S. population and over 30% of the total school enrollment. And, by the year 2000, the United States will become home to the world's fifth largest population of persons of Hispanic origin (Boyer, 1984). The problems attendant to a multilingual school populace cannot be willed away by government decree; we must seek solutions that address the problem in all its ramifications.

A BROADER REALITY

A number of interdisciplinary scholars have attempted to analyze schooling within broader confines, within its proper historical, social,

political, economic, and ideological context (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bernstein, 1977; Young, 1971; MacDonald, 1977; Loparte, 1974; Gorelick, 1977; Giroux, 1979, 1980; Mehan, 1979; Sharp and Green, 1975; Yeakey, 1981). An exacting analysis of the various theoretical perspectives is beyond the scope of this article. Yet, we should be mindful of the facts that the signal contribution of these theorists is that they advance our knowledge relative to the nature and function of schooling in industrial terms by informing their deliberations with the language of power, hegemony, and social control. In so doing, they strip schools of their purported innocence and expose inequities in the distribution of economic goods and services and certain forms of cultural capital as well. It is within this political and economic context that one can examine the relationship between schooling and social control.

Public schools find themselves in a deceptive paradox. Charged with the responsibility of educating those who will, in turn, educate future generations, they play a pivotal role in the legitimation and reproduction of a society characterized by a marked degree of social and economic inequality (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). The ambiguity of the role of schooling is a delusive one. On one hand, schools as educational institutions address a very real need on the part of all socioeconomic classes to learn about, upgrade, transform, and better their very existence. On the other hand, schools as institutions exist within an alignment of other social, economic, and political institutions that make them a fundamental part of the power structure (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Yeakey and Johnston, 1979b).

Schooling and its perceived neutrality cannot obfuscate the fact that schools operate within a social structure that disproportionately serves dominant, controlling interests (Jencks, 1979). Thus, schools embody structural and ideological contradictions that are related to larger conflicts in the American social order. Ours is a social order caught between the imperatives of its social welfare responsibilities and its functional allegiance to the conditions of capitalism and profit (Giroux, 1980). The schools' dual posture is testament to this political nature, and highlights the necessity to distill the mutlifaceted ways in which schooling serves and contradicts the latent and manifest functions of the existing social order.

The host of reform reports did make plain the ways in which formal schooling relates to our highly industrialized society. Moreover, the reports inadvertently unveiled the institutional contradictions and goal conflicts that besiege an educational system operating in a competitive society where formal schooling stratifies and influences social status and life chances. Our nation's goal conflicts and our schools' system of patterned stratification have often been masked by our rhetoric of

egalitarianism and democratization of schooling. Embedded in the conflict between equality versus meritocracy is the age-old question: Can our schools be equal and excellent, too? This conflict looms large in most modern-day societies, irrespective of the type of established social order.

> This is due, in part, to the fact that the elites, those of the upper strata in most societies, participate in politics and assume leadership positions because it is expected of them, a sense of *noblesse oblige*. But the paramount issue is one of social class status and what it commands, for not only do those of the upper strata expect to govern and partake of society's bounty, but it is expected of them. For those who would argue that status and both the amount and type of schooling which one receives was and is incidental in American society, we hasten to remind the reader that the introduction of public schooling was subsequent, by at least two hundred years to schooling for the rich, for those of the upper strata. And it was only after repeated attempts by those proponents of egalitarianism and democratization that public schooling, on far from a massive scale, commenced. Even in contemporary America, we view repeated attempts by the lower classes, who hold a somewhat visionary yet sublime faith in the value of schooling, to eradicate existing social and political realities and enhance social mobility, however unwarranted that faith might be. It is as if schooling is the *rue du passage*, the ladder upon which ambition climbs to privilege [Yeakey and Gordon, 1982: 105-106].

And the more society depends on advanced sophisticated technology, the more acute the dilemma becomes.

The reform reports speculated that America's troubles emanated from a decline of economic and technical power worldwide, from increased unemployment, and from a slide in intellectual achievement as measured by test scores. The issues the reports cite are not the source of trouble, but merely the contemporary manifestations of deeper ills. America's position in world trade is in part a result of faulty management, corporate greed as our corporations sought lower-paid workers in foreign lands, and chaos and confusion resulting from the energy shortages in the late seventies. Further, the fact that American business placed fewer major resources into research and development activities than its foreign counterparts has contributed to the problem. Finally, American industry has invested its profits abroad, as opposed to reinvestment in our economy (Ducharme, 1984). Leonard (1984: 50) suggests that

> the loss of U.S. dominance in the world car market was caused less by lack of technical skill than by flaws in judgment, character, and values. High school graduate assembly line workers did not participate in the decision

to short-circuit quality in favor of slapdash production and planned obsolescence linked with slick, high pressure promotion. The disastrous American emphasis on short term bottom line management owes less to science classes at Central High than to M.B.A. classes at Harvard.

Although it may be true that the United States does not enjoy the complete dominance it once did in many fields of endeavor, our declining preeminence reflects many complex factors, including progress made in schooling and industry in Europe, Asia, and much of the rest of the world since World War II (Goodman, 1983). Forever guilty of oversimplification, the reform reports disregard the relationship between schooling and employment. If America could or would suddenly improve the schooling of all the unemployed, this fact alone would not create more jobs (Goodman, 1983). Our political leaders must bear the crux of responsibility for inadequate planning and forecasting.

One major problem our nation must now face is that the schools have done far too good a job in producing people well qualified to perform roles for which society has either no need or starkly diminished need. Moreover, longevity and university schooling have so collided that older and younger people are competing for the same positions, for the same piece of the shrinking American pie. The imbalance between the number of graduates and the declining number of jobs in an era of increasing scarcity has reinforced competition for entry to the next level of schooling (Goodman, 1983).

ON MORAL EDUATION

Absent from the reform reports is any discussion of the intrinsic, as opposed to extrinsic, value of schooling—that is, learning for the sheer pleasure of learning, the affective aspects of learning, the building of a cooperative spirit, of policy and of community. Schooling as a way to beat the Russians and best the Germans and the Japanese reveals a constricted understanding of the meaning of excellence. The reform reports reveal a glaring bias toward schooling that produces social and economic utility as the major indicator of excellence. Although it is true that generations of Americans have utilized schooling as a way out of social and economic privation, "you really do not generate the educational values that count when you stress only these external, comparative advantages. People do not become educated or liberated so much as they become opportunistic in relation to schooling" (Greenfield, 1983: 100). According to the reform reports, increased industry and commerce

are the preferred long-term outcomes of educational reforms that "while important are meaningless without the intellectual, moral, and spiritual learnings . . . crucial to the creation of a genuine democratic society" (Nash and Ducharme, 1983: 39).

A score or more years ago, American historian Richard Hofstadter (1963) suggested that schooling generally has existed to make individual social and economic advancement possible, not to cultivate certain intellectual qualities. Hofstadter made the distinction between the excellence of intelligence (a mind that is manipulative, adaptive, practical, targeted, and immediate) and the excellence of intellect (a mind that is critical, creative, contemplative, theoretical, and imaginative). Hofstadter's analysis should aid us in understanding the roots of anti-intellectualism in American life so vividly portrayed in the reform reports. Hofstadter claims that Americans have preferred people of intelligence because they appear to be among "the up and coming," and people of intellect appear to be unreliable and even subversive. In our culture, professionals whose schooling has given them functional expertise are more esteemed and remunerated than the prophet, scholar, or artist. As a result, the present-day reform movement will fail to produce lasting excellence because it is "advanced without a moral or intellectual center" (Nash and Ducharme, 1983).

Our society is afflicted with what is called the "psychology of affluence" or the "culture of narcissism," which is predicated on the notion that you can always expect and get more. This belief is founded on a "me first" mentality that, in the long run, is self-defeating and ultimately undermines the possibility of any genuine self-fulfillment (Yankelovich, 1981; Lasch, 1979). This psychology of affluence depends on a strong economic base and on the growth of the national economy. The most frightening aspect of it all is that we are a society of rising expectations in the throes of increasing economic scarcity. However, we have been forewarned of the cataclysmic results of our self-indulgences (Potter, 1954; Ehrlich, 1974; Handlin and Handlin, 1975).

What is needed is a shift in values that would deemphasize our competitive spirit gone awry and diminish our heightened sense of materialism. The social virtues--sharing rather than taking, or giving as opposed to receiving; participating as opposed to winning; and sacrificing and even denying one's own pleasures of the moment—largely have escaped us. If we as a society could set priorties on our values, then "the rest - the competitive and material benefits --would follow. But we keep trying to do it the other way around" (Greenfield, 1984: 100).

CONCLUSION

As one reads the reform reports, one searches in vain for any semblance of the very reform the reports claim to deliver. For if everything proposed in all the reports were put into practice, the resultant system of public schooling would not be radically different from the school of today, with one exception. The reformed school would be more highly stratified. We will come perilously close to emulating the educational systems of those with whom we are locked in competition. Why do we say "perilous"? Because there is a price to pay for the reforms and it will be borne by those who can afford it the least: the children of low-income families. If one understands the heightened synergistic relationship between achievement and family income, the argument becomes not only irrefutable, but moot.

Far too many of the reforms are emblematic of our conservative times and austere budgets that have given rise to the traditional, to the normative, to a type of sameness and uniformity as well as an unwillingness to both tolerate and financially support deviations from the norm. The reformists' commitment to a national curriculum, standardized testing, and English as the only language has succeeded in moving the hidden curriculum—indeed the hidden agenda—to center stage. We are being asked to subscribe to the discredited notion that all students, irrespective of their social status, sex, and racial, ethnic, or religious background will be treated equally by being held to the same academic standards. We are left with the absurdity that treating people the same is the same as treating them equally.

Special mention must be made of the minority communities in the large urban centers who in the late 1950s and 1960s foretold of much of the malaise in which we find ourselves. Minority communities are experiencing a form of déjà vu of realities with which the larger American society must now grapple. Accountability, back to basics, and basic literacy were the focal points of urban parents even before such words assumed the vernacular status they now enjoy. Urban parents did not ask for school desegregation, but for accountability through community control of their schools. Instead, they were given school decentralization and teacher unionism. How fortuitous that almost 25 years ago, urban parents were among the first to question school professionals' claim to expertise (Yeakey and Johnston, 1979a). Thus, while the larger populace is preoccupied with recommendations on curriculum, time usage, and so on, the attention of the urban populace is again riveted

elsewhere—on the larger question of who will direct the course of policy over the next four years.

Further, our present crisis in public schooling must be recognized as a crisis of a larger sort. Our schooling crisis is but reflective of a deeper crisis in the American ethos, and we are being forced to confront our inherent contradictions. Consider the following points:

- More than half of all serious crimes in the United States are now committed by youths 10 to 17 years of age.
- Teachers everywhere agree that students of all ages have far less respect for authority than they once had.
- In some schools, during recess, youngsters no longer play as they once did on playgrounds. They rove in gangs.
- There's hardly a community in America that does not face the problems of teenage substance abuse. The number of teenage alcoholics is estimated to be 2.5 million; the number of 12- to 17-year-olds experimenting with marijuana and cocaine has doubled.
- Many colleges and universities have had to abandon honor codes because of the frequency of violations. Surveys reveal that at the college level, if given the opportunity, 50% to 80% of students would cheat on exams.
- One West Los Angeles company working the "term paper flimflam" has been operating since 1969, boasting of a catalog of over 14,000 titles and taking pride in adding several hundred new titles every year. The company employs 50 professional writers in all fields. All topics are covered. Business is brisk.
- In recent years, $23 million was taken out the front door of banks in armed robbery; three times this amount, about $80 million, was taken out the back door in fraud and embezzlement [Holland, 1984: 520].

Thus, our nation is educationally at risk, but not solely for the reasons put forth by the reformers. As Socrates suggested, the argument "is not about just any question, but about the way one should live."

NOTE

The national reform reports include the Twentieth Century Fund (1983), National Science Board (1983), the Carnegie Foundation (1983), and the College Entrance Exami-

nation Board (1983). Related studies include Adler (1982), Goodlad (1983), and Sizer (1984).

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3

Rethinking the language of schooling

Henry A. Giroux

Source: Henry A. Giroux, 'Rethinking the language of schooling', *Language Arts*, vol. 61, no. 1, 1984, pp. 33-40.

In the current political climate, there is little talk about schools and democracy and a great deal of debate about how schools might become more successful in meeting industrial needs and contributing to economic productivity. Against a landscape of shrinking economic resources, the breakup of liberal and radical public school coalitions, and the erosion of civil rights, the public debate about the nature of schooling has been replaced by the concerns and interests of management experts. That is, amidst the growing failures and disruptions in both American society and in the public schools, a set of concerns and problems has emerged conjured up in terms like "input-output," "predictibility," and "cost-effectiveness."

Unfortunately, at a time when we need a different language of analysis to understand the structure and meaning of schooling, Americans have retreated back into the discourse of management and administration, with its focus on issues of efficiency and control. These issues have overshadowed concerns regarding understanding. Similarly, the need to develop at all levels of schooling a radical pedagogy concerned with critical literacy and active citizenship has given way to a conservative pedagogy that emphasizes technique and passivity. The stress is no longer on helping students to "read" the world critically; instead, it is on helping students to "master" the tools of reading. The question of how teachers, administrators, and students produce meaning, and whose interest it serves, is subsumed under the imperative to master the "facts." The script is grim.

These issues raise fundamental questions about how educators and schools contribute to these problems, yet they simultaneously point to the possibility of developing modes of language, thinking and teaching that may be used to overcome them, or at least help to establish the conditions that may be used to resolve them. I want to pursue this issue by examining a central concern: how can we make schooling meaningful so as to make it critical and how can we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory?

Theory and Language

I want to analyze this question and the ways in which "traditional" views of schooling have responded to it. The precondition for such an analysis is the need for a new theoretical framework and mode of language that will enable teachers,

parents, and others to understand both the limits and the enabling possibilities that characterize schools. Currently, traditional language about schooling is anchored in a rather mechanical and limited worldview. Essentially, it is a worldview borrowed primarily from the discourse of behavioristic learning psychology, which focuses on the best way to learn a *given* body of knowledge, and from the logic of scientific management, as reflected in the back to basics movement, competency testing, and systems management schemes. The result has been a language that prevents educators from critically examining the ideological assumptions embedded in their own language and the schooling experiences that they help to structure.

Generally speaking, the notion of language, particularly as it is used by educators, is evaluated according to whether it is simple or complex, clear or vague, concrete or abstract. However, this analysis falls prey to a theoretical error; it reduces the question of language to a technical issue, i.e., the issue of clarity. But the real meaning of educational language has to be understood as the product of a specific theoretical framework, via the assumptions that govern it, and, finally, through the social, political and ideological relations to which it points and which it legitimates. In other words, the issue of clarity often becomes a mask that downplays questions about values and interests while applauding ideas that are well-packaged in the language of simplicity. The point here is that any educational theory that is to be critical and emancipatory, that is to function in the interests of critical understanding and self-determining action, must generate a discourse that moves beyond the established language of administration and conformity. Such a discourse requires a struggle and a commitment in order to be appropriated and understood. The way language can mystify and hide its own assumptions becomes clear, for instance, in the way educators often label students who respond to alienating and oppressive school experiences with a whole range of resistant behaviors. They call such students deviant rather than resistant, for such a label would raise different questions about the nature of schooling and the reasons for such student behavior.

Generating a New Discourse

Implicit in my analysis is the need to construct a new discourse and mode of analysis about the nature of schooling that would serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it should analyse and indict the shortcomings and failures inherent in traditional views of schooling. On the other hand, it should reveal new possibilities for thinking about and organizing school experiences. In order to explore the possibilities for reorganization, I want to focus specifically on the following concepts: rationality, problematic, ideology, and cultural capital.

Rationality

The notion of rationality has a dual meaning. First, it refers to the set of assumptions and practices that allow people to understand and shape their own and others' experiences. Second, it refers to the interests that define and qualify how

one frames and engages problems confronted in lived experience. For instance, interests exhibited in teacher talk and behavior may be rooted in the need to control, to explain, or to act from principles of justice. Rationality, as a critical construct, can also be applied to classroom materials such as curriculum packages, films, etc. Such materials always embody a set of assumptions about the world, a given subject, and a set of interests. This becomes evident in many of the so-called "teacher proof" instructional materials now flooding the market. These materials promote a deskilling of teachers by separating conception from execution and by reducing the role that teachers play in the actual creation and teaching of such materials. Teacher decisions about what should be taught, how it might meet the intellectual and cultural needs of students, and how it might be evaluated are rendered unimportant in these packages, since they have already predefined and answered such questions. The materials control teachers' decisions and, as a result, teachers do not need to exercise reasoned judgments. Thus, teachers are reduced to the role of obedient technicians, carrying out the dictates of the curriculum package. Needless to say, teachers may ignore such packages, may use them for different purposes, or may fight their use in the schools. But the real issue is understanding the interests embedded in such curriculum packages and how such interests structure classroom experiences. The language of efficiency and control promotes obedience rather than critique.

Problematic

All modes of rationality contain conceptual structures identified both by the questions raised and the questions ignored. These are called problematics. Problematics refer not only to what is included in a worldview, but also what is left out and silenced. That which is not said is as important as that which is said. The value of this concept becomes more obvious when one remembers that traditional educational theory has always been wedded to the visible, to the literal, and to what can be seen and operationalized. Educational theory has usually not included a language or mode of analysis that looks beyond the given or the phenomenal. For instance, traditional concerns of educators center around the formal curriculum and, as a result, the issues that emerge are familiar ones: what subjects are going to be taught? what forms of instruction will be used? what kinds of objectives will be developed? and how can we match the objectives with corresponding forms of evaluation? As important as these concerns are, they dance on the surface of reality. They do not include a focus on the nature and function of the hidden curriculum, that is, those messages and values that are conveyed to students "silently" through the selection of specific forms of knowledge, the use of specific classroom relations, and the defining characteristics of the school organizational structure. Sexist, racist, and class-specific messages that stalk behind the language of objectives and school discipline are conveniently ignored.

Ideology

Ideology, as I use the term, is a dynamic construct that refers to the ways in which meanings are produced, mediated, and embodied in knowledge forms, social prac-

tices, and cultural experiences. In this case, ideology is a set of doctrines as well as a medium through which teachers and educators make sense of their own experiences and those of the world in which they find themselves. As a pedagogical tool, ideology becomes useful for understanding not only how schools sustain and produce meanings, but also how individuals and groups produce, negotiate, modify, or resist them as well. For instance, an understanding of how ideology works presents teachers with a heuristic tool to examine how their own views about knowledge, human nature, values, and society are mediated through the "common sense" assumptions they use to structure classroom experiences. Assumptions about learning, achievement, teacher-student relations, objectivity, school authority, etc., need to be evaluated critically by educators.

Cultural Capital

Just as a country distributes goods and services, what can be labeled as material capital, it also distributes and legitimates certain forms of knowledge, language practices, values, modes of style, and so forth, or what can be labeled as cultural capital. One must only consider what gets labeled as high-status knowledge in the schools and universities and, thus, provide legitimacy to certain forms of knowledge and social practices. Currently, the fine arts, the social science disciplines, and classical languages are not considered as legitimate as those bodies of knowledge found in the natural sciences or those methods of inquiry associated with the areas of business and management. These decisions are arbitrary and are based on certain values and questions of power and control, not to mention a certain view of the nature of society and the future. The concept of cultural capital also represents certain ways of talking, acting, moving, dressing, and socializing that are institutionalized by schools. Schools are not merely instructional sites but also sites where the culture of the dominant society is learned and where students experience the difference between those status and class distinctions that exist in the larger society.

Traditional Schooling

The rationality that dominates traditional views of schooling and curriculum is rooted in the narrow concerns for effectiveness, behavioral objectives, and principles of learning that treat knowledge as something to be consumed and schools as merely instructional sites designed to pass onto students a "common" culture and set of skills that will enable them to operate effectively in the wider society. Steeped in the logic of technical rationality, the problematic of traditional curriculum theory and schooling centers on questions about the most thorough or most efficient way to learn specific kinds of knowledge, to create moral consensus, and to provide modes of schooling that reproduce the existing society. For instance, traditional educators may ask *how* the school should seek to attain a certain predefined goal, but they rarely ask *why* such a goal might be beneficial to some socioeconomic groups and not to others, or *why* schools, as they are presently organized, tend to block the possibility that specific classes will attain a measure of economic and political autonomy.

The ideology that guides the present rationality of the school is relatively conservative: it is primarily concerned with how-to questions and does not question relationships between knowledge and power or between culture and politics. In other words, questions concerning the role of school as an agency of social and cultural reproduction in a class-divided society are ignored as are questions that illuminate the intersubjective basis of establishing meaning, knowledge, and what are considered legitimate social relationships. The issue of how teachers, students, and representatives from the wider society generate meaning tends to be obscured in favor of the issue of how people can master someone else's meaning, thus depoliticizing both the notion of school culture and the notion of classroom pedagogy. In my view, this is a limited and sometimes crippling rationality. It ignores the dreams, histories, and visions that people bring to schools. Its central concerns are rooted in a false notion of objectivity and in a discourse that finds its quintessential expression in the attempt to find universal principles of education that are lodged in the ethos of instrumentalism and a self-serving individualism.

Alternative Theories

Against the theoretical shortcomings that characterize traditional views of schooling and curriculum new theories of educational practice must be developed. Such theories must begin with a continuous and critical questioning of the "taken for granted" in school knowledge and practice. Moreover, an attempt must be made to analyze schools as sites that, while basically reproducing the dominant society, also contain possibilities for educating students to become active, critical citizens (not simply workers). Schools must come to be seen and studied as both instructional and cultural sites.

One of the most important theoretical elements for developing critical modes of schooling centers around the notion of culture. Schools must be seen as institutions marked by the same complex of contradictory cultures that characterize the dominant society. Schools are social sites constituted by a complex of dominant *and* subordinate cultures, each characterized by the power they have to define and legitimate a specific view of reality. Teachers and others interested in education must come to understand how the dominant culture functions at all levels of schooling to disconfirm the cultural experiences of the "excluded majorities." It also means that teachers, parents, and others should fight against the powerlessness of students by affirming their own cultural experiences and histories. For teachers, this means examining their own cultural capital and examining the way in which it either benefits or victimizes students. Thus, the central question for building a critical pedagogy is the question of how we unravel and critically understand those lived antagonist relations that characterize school cultures, and how we help students, particularly from the oppressed classes, recognize that the dominant school culture is not neutral and does not generally serve their needs, while at the same time raising the issue of how it is that the dominant culture functions to make them, as students, feel powerless. The answer to this issue lies, in part, in revealing the myths, lies, and injustices at the heart of the dominant school culture

and building a critical mode of teaching that engages rather than suppresses history and critical practice. Such an activity calls for a mode of dialogue and critique that unmasks the dominant school culture's attempt to escape from history and that interrogates the assumptions and practices that inform the lived experiences of day-to-day schooling.

Educators and parents will have to come to view knowledge as neither neutral nor objective and, instead, view it as a social construction embodying particular interests and assumptions. Knowledge must be linked to the issue of power, which suggests that educators and others must raise questions about its truth claims as well as the interests that such knowledge serves. Knowledge, in this case, does not become valuable because it is legitimized by curriculum experts. Its value is linked to the power it has as a mode of critique and social transformation. In other words, knowledge becomes important to the degree that it helps human beings understand not only the assumptions embedded in its form and content, but also the processes whereby knowledge is produced, appropriated, and transformed within specific social and historical settings.

Certainly, a critical view of school knowledge would look different than a traditional view of school knowledge. Primarily, critical knowledge would instruct students and teachers alike about their status as a group situated within a society with specific relations of domination and subordination. Critical knowledge would help illuminate how such groups could develop a language and a discourse released from their own distorted cultural inheritance. The organizing question here would be: what is it that this society has made of me that I no longer want to be? Put another way, a critical mode of knowledge would illuminate for teachers and students how to appropriate the most progressive dimensions of their own cultural histories as well as how to restructure and appropriate the most radical aspects of the dominant culture. Finally, such knowledge would have to provide a motivational connection to action itself, it would have to link a critical decoding of history to a vision of the future that not only exploded the myths of the existing society, but also reached into those pockets of desires and needs that harbored a longing for a new society and new forms of social relations, relations free from the pathology of racism, sexism, and class domination.

Teachers and administrators must be able to address issues concerning the wider functions of schooling. Issues that deal with questions of power, philosophy, social theory, and politics must be opened to scrutiny. Teachers and administrators must be seen as more than technicians. The technocratic, sterile rationality that dominates the wider culture, as well as teacher education, pays little attention to theoretical and ideological issues. Teachers are trained to use forty-seven different models of teaching, administration, or evaluation. Yet, teachers are not taught to be critical of these models. In short, they are taught a form of conceptual and political illiteracy. Educators must prevent individuals who reduce teaching to the implementations of methods from entering the teaching profession. Schools need prospective teachers who are both theoreticians and practitioners, who can combine theory, imagination, and techniques. Moreover, public school systems should

sever their relations with teacher-training institutions that simply turn out technicians, students who function less as scholars and more as clerks. This move may seem harsh, but it is a small antidote compared to the critical illiteracy and incompetency such teachers often reproduce in our schools.

Instead of mastering and refining the use of methodologies, teachers and administrators should approach education by examining their own perspectives about society, schools, and emancipation. Rather than attempting to escape from their own ideologies and values, educators should confront them critically so as to understand how society has shaped them as individuals, what it is they believe, and how to structure more positively the effects they have upon students and others. Put another way, teachers and administrators, in particular, must attempt to understand how issues of class, gender, and race have left an imprint upon how they think and act. Such a critical interrogation provides the foundation for a democratic school. The democraticization of schooling involves the need for teachers to build alliances with other teachers, and not simply union alliances. Such alliances must develop around new forms of social relations that include both teaching and the organization and administration of school policy. It is important that teachers break through the cellular structure of teaching as it presently exists in most schools. Teachers need to acquire more control over the development of curriculum materials; they need to have more control over how such materials might be taught and evaluated and how alliances over curriculum issues could be established with members of the larger community.

The present structures of most schools isolate teachers and cut off the possibilities for democratic decision making and positive social relations. Relations between school administrators and teaching staff often represent the most disabling aspects of the division of labor, the division between conception and execution. Such a management model is demeaning to teachers and students alike. If we are to take the issue of schooling seriously, schools should be the one site where democratic social relations become a part of one's lived experiences.

Finally, any viable form of schooling needs to be informed by a passion and faith in the necessity of struggling in the interest of creating a better world. These seem like strange words in a society that has elevated the notion of self-interest to the status of a universal law. And yet our very survival depends on the degree to which the principles of communality, human struggle, and social justice aimed at improving the privileges of all groups eventually prevail. Public schools need to be organized around a vision that celebrates not what is but what could be, a vision that looks beyond the immediate to the future, and a vision that links struggle to a new set of human possibilities. This is a call for public institutions that affirm one's faith in the possibility of people like teachers and administrators taking risks and engaging life so as to enrich it. We must celebrate the critical impulse and lay bare the distinction between reality and the conditions that conceal reality. Such is the task that all educators must face, and I am quite sure that it will not be met by organizing schools around the goals of raising reading and math scores or, for that matter, improving students' SAT scores. These are not minor concerns, but

our primary concern is to address the crucial educational issue of what it means to teach students to think critically, to learn how to affirm their own experiences, and to understand the need to struggle individually and collectively for a more just society.

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4 Class, ideology, and the basic skills movement: A study in the sociology of educational reform

H. Svi Shapiro

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In the recent attempt to elaborate a theory of schooling in capitalist society there has been an unfortunate, if widespread, tendency to underestimate the significance of classes or ideologies outside of those that constitute the ruling social groups.[1] There is a clearly Marcusean inclination to describe what Marxist analysis calls the societal "superstructure" as the unalloyed product of those holding economic power. Such simplistic imagery, in addition to being poor sociology and historically inaccurate, also (perhaps more consequentially) sustains a view of the social process in which educational, cultural, or political impotence becomes the unavoidable lot of anyone outside of the dominant social positions.

Moreover, such a view commits the serious error of neglecting the extent to which the cultural "practices" of bourgeois society are, in fact, constituted through the interaction of competing moments of belief, values, and meaning.[2] Thus, education, as a part of these practices, must be seen, not as the unmediated effect of a single social class (the frequent interpretation of "correspondence" theorists), but as the complex consequence of the struggle between both dominant *and* subordinate classes or social interests.[3] While we are under no illusion that such a struggle occurs in a situation of political or social parity, the consequences, in educational terms, must still be viewed as significant.

This paper will focus on what has been termed the "basic skills" movement as an illustration of the way in which education is an arena for the struggle between contending classes, interests, and ideologies. Specifically, the basic skills movement is viewed as a reaction by sections of the middle class to educational changes that occurred in America during the 1960s and 1970s; changes that were themselves products of broader shifts in ideology and class relations during this period. At the core of this reaction, I believe, is the demand for a re-grounding of class positions and social hierarchy in traditional notions of the social division of labor. Such notions are rooted in the division between those workers who are educated and whose work is believed to depend on the successful use of the intellect, and those whose work does not.

To argue that the basic skills movement may be understood, fundamentally, as part of a middle-class attempt to reassert the hierarchical nature of class

divisions is not to disregard the undoubted complexity of the movement. While avoiding any definitive formulation, I will assume that the primary pedagogic concern of the basic skills movement is to increase the level of numeracy and literacy. It must be recognized, however, that the common association of basic skills with notions of "traditional" schooling (including, frequently, an emphasis on discipline, circumscribed curricular offerings, patriotic and God-fearing attitudes) suggests wider and more complex motives. Nevertheless, this paper will concentrate on basic skills defined primarily in terms of their more clearly academic goals.

One further note on sociological categories. In this paper the axis of social conflict is that between what is commonly referred to as the middle class and other subordinate social groups (working class, working poor, and so on). The distinction, broadly speaking, corresponds to that of the mental–manual division of labor; middle-class groups receive the imprimatur for intellectual work through what Nicos Poulantzas refers to as the rituals and symbolisms of the educational system. In traditional Marxian terms, such a conflict might be conceived as one that pits segments of the working class against one another (since all the groups are subordinate to those who control the means of production). This, however, should in no way minimize the significance of the conflict. Indeed, I believe it is precisely the divisions and distinctions among working people—especially the penchant for "middle-class" identification—that has sustained the characteristically American hostility towards any kind of unified working-class political identity. The drive to distinguish oneself as middle class (together with other divisive tendencies such as racism, strong ethnic ties, and regionalism) has given the United States its uniquely fragmented social structure. At least in the short run, the thesis developed in this paper does not provide encouragement for "new working class" theorists[4] or others who would like to believe that the huge and expanding army of white-collar and professional workers in America is ready to abandon its middle-class self-image and adopt, instead, an ideology of working-class solidarity.

Educational Reform and the Democratization of Culture

In looking at the interactive forces which have had, as their consequence, the basic skills movement, perhaps the most visible has been the curriculum reform efforts of the 1960s. Such efforts were organized around a cultural principle which, for want of a better term, might be called populist. Curiously, while many effects of the sixties' experiments and reforms have been swept away during the decade of conservatism that has followed. they continue to serve as an important focus (symbolic or otherwise) for the discontent of basic skills protagonists.

In the use of the term "populist," the intention is to draw together a range of curricular, pedagogic, and institutional demands which (as we shall see below) had as their unifying purpose the attempt to reduce the pedagogic distance between the cultural and epistemological experiences of the classroom, and those found in the real life experience of the student—in the street, the com-

munity, the home, or the workplace. This movement was paralleled in other areas of the sixties' cultural and artisitic activities. Central to the nature of these demands, and certainly buttressing their urgency, were questions concerning the relationship between the "culture" of the school and the exclusion of or discrimination against ethnic and racial groups. In addition, there was the more general demand for "relevance," that is, a call to relate the activities and experience of schooling to the life of the student.

The educational reform movement, as is widely recognized, resulted in the proliferation of courses in schools which included, most notably, studies in the history and culture of disadvantaged minorities; in environmental and ecological concerns; in contemporary politics; and in the mass media, current events, and social issues. There was also a widening of literary instruction into contemporary themes, a concern for "relevance" in history and social studies, and an interest in the exploration of personal experience—sexual activity and relationships, drugs, family life, moral and value concerns, and so on.[5] In addition to the widely heralded proliferation and diversification of curriculum, there emerged (though on a more limited scale) curricula that focussed upon—and offered direct experience of—the local or surrounding community (the "school-without-walls" being, perhaps, the best noted example of this focus). In the "alternative" school—that most visible or notorious symbol of the reforms of this period—many of these tendencies merged; namely, a concern with contemporary social issues, a pedagogy that often included direct, out-of-the-classroom experience, and an exploration of the student's particular cultural experience and personal identity.[6]

Taken as a whole, such reform can be seen as an affirmative (or more accurately, a reaffirmation) of a powerful and enduring educational theme in which schooling is identified with the apprehension of the collective or common culture.[7] While the curricular, institutional, and pedagogic elements mentioned above cannot be said to form a clearly articulated presentation of such a view, the concern is, I believe, still a central one. It is evidenced in changes in the curriculum so that its focus shifts towards an exploration of contemporary social experience (encapsulated in the often trivializing notion of "relevance"), and in institutional changes that move the school towards embodying or reflecting the social and cultural context in which it is located (through integration, mainstreaming, and so on). The underlying assertion is that the "culture" of the school needs to comprise many, if not all, of those values, beliefs, meanings, and experiences which are found within the wider society, and that the purpose of the school is connected to the process of transmitting, facilitating access to, and widespread apprehension of, this culture. The powerful assertion of this view, beginning in the 1960s, engendered, inevitably, important curricular and institutional demands—demands which have, despite the more recent changes, continued to reverberate within education. In curriculum, the focus on issues of sexual, ethnic, racial, and social "relevance" demonstrated these demands with its concerns for life in the present (not in the past) and of life as it is experienced by all those who constitute society (not just a select group). At the institutional level, the public school, in order to more truly reflect the common culture,

attempted to become more representative of the whole social order—black and white, rich and poor, "normal" and handicapped, and so on.

At the centre of the ideological underpinnings for these changes was a resurgence of demands for greater egalitarianism in American life. Such a resurgence was fed by the civil, economic, and social struggles of minorities and women, and by the anti-hierarchical and anti-bureaucratic concerns of the student movement. The cultural (and related educational) revolt that resulted from the egalitarianism had, at its heart, a number of common pressures: these included the attempt to reduce the separation between (or merge) what constitutes "culture" and real life; the attempt to assimilate politics and culture; the concern to erase the separateness of personal and cultural experience; and the attempt to reduce or eliminate the traditional hierarchies that restrict who may participate in the "making" of culture, what counts as comprising culture, and who is able to appreciate it. Daniel Bell (1976), in his discussion of the effects of this radical temper on the arts, noted that there was "stylistically . . . an attempt to eclipse 'distance'—psychic distance, social distance, and aesthetic distance—and insist on the absolute presentness, the simultaneity and immediacy, of experience" (p. 42). In all, he said, "there was a 'democratization' of culture in which nothing could be considered high or low . . . and a world of sensibility which was accessible to all" (p. 130).

The result of this movement for greater equality in American society, sought by minorities, women, the poor, students, and others, generated tendencies leading towards a radical redefinition or reinterpretation of the meaning of culture. There was a movement towards reducing the hierarchically ordered separation between those practices, meanings, symbols, knowledge, and so on associated with the notion of "culture" and those relegated to what members of the Frankfurt School of Social Research have called "civilization."[8] Included in the latter were the practices, meanings, and so on associated with the "daily round of existence"—for example, work, community, and the family. On the other hand, culture—retaining its connotation of "high culture" (the select heritage of intellectual, artistic, literary, and aesthetic products) claimed to represent more noble concerns. From this perspective, culture could no longer be seen as restricted to only *certain* human activities or endeavors, or found in only a very select number of locations. Instead, culture is to be viewed as existing wherever man makes the world the object of his knowledge, submitting it to a process of transformation, altering reality. It becomes synonymous with the *entire* range of human practice and social experience.[9] The street, factory, neighborhood, and so on, are no less a part of the cultural matrix than the more traditional sites of cultural transmission—schools, museums, and so on. Nor is culture quite so connected to the abstract, the symbolic, or things past—it is less the accumulation of a select tradition than the ongoing product of the total human experience. It is pre-eminently concerned with the life presnetly lived, and the language, concerns, meanings, values, and activities of those living.

The result of all this was precisely a legitimation of educational reforms that led to an extended and broadened version of what constitutes educational

experience or "counts" as educational knowledge. Media "literacy" no less than the "classics," Black culture no less than U.S. history, ecological awareness no less than algebra or trigonometry, could be viewed as valid components of school curriculum. Nor, indeed, did school constitute the only, or even the best, site for education. It was seen as suffering from its cloistered unrelatedness to the "real" world outside.

More consequential, however, than the relatively small expansion or diversification of the curriculum, or widened opportunities for "credit" for work undertaken outside of the classroom, is the relationship of these changes to more fundamental ideological concerns. It is around such concerns rather than the precise nature of the curricular or pedagogic changes that the real tensions underlying the basic skills movement may be found. It is here that the radical reforms of the 1960s and early '70s begin to undermine the relationship of the school to the social division of labor and the reproduction of the disjunction between middle-class and working-class life. The expansion and diversification of curriculum during this period, for example, reduces the ordered hierarchical character of school knowledge. In this sense the curriculum reforms initiated during the 1960s did indeed undermine the epistemological bases for social ranking and hierarchy that are embedded in the process of schooling (we shall return to this in the next section). More directly, however, the incorporation of experiences and knowledge more closely related to the lives of students (particularly those most often excluded from, or unsuccessful in, the educational process) erodes the traditional separation of school experience from real life. As we have noted, it is precisely this separation that is fundamental to the division between "culture" and "civilization." In other words, to sustain the notion of "becoming educated" (where education refers to the selective transmission and incorporation of cultural "capital") requires that schools provide experiences that are marked by their separateness from the life of students (some more than others) and whose availablity or accessibility can thus be regulated by the school (and ultimately by the state). It is precisely, as Michael Young (1971) has shown, the character of school knowledge or experience that has traditionally underpinned this separation—its compartmentalization, abstraction, concern with literary and symbolic manipulation, as well as its emphasis on the impersonal, the past or the distant, and its spurning of the language or other culturally particularistic traits of the student (which is to say, of the lower-class student).

Given the fundamental social distinctions that are transmitted and reinforced by the ability to cope with or succeed at the academic curriculum, it is no wonder that the movement for curriculum change, centred around the populist notion of "relevance," met with such hostility. It was perceived (correctly) as a challenge to the selective process that underpins the social division of labor—the very basis of middle-class status. By allowing the inclusion of a greatly extended range of curriculum experiences, many of which were more directly related to the lives of the poor, minorities, or working-class students, the particular character of the "cultural capital," which is both the source and the product of middle-class advantage, was threatened.[10] A larger and less exclusive set of symbols, mean-

ings, knowledge, and values could be utilized as "capital." In short (and to continue the economic metaphor), with a drastic increase in the accessibility to, or availability of, the "cultural capital" required for educational success, the middle class felt itself threatened by a devaluation of its most precious resource—the ability to transmit the advantages of the division of labor to its offspring through its disproportionate possession of "cultural capital."

It is clear then that the curriculum changes initiated in the 1960s, with their populist implications for the democratization of culture, posed an important threat to the stable reproduction of class advantage. Those sections of the middle class who most clearly felt this threat could do no more than insist on a return to some standards through which their cultural advantage would be restored and maintained. With the utilitarian erosion of any notion of being educated connected to general intellectual or aesthetic development, such a return was to the barebones concept of "basics"—a simplified inventory of capabilities that marked one as able or not able to perform "mental" work and hence to qualify for white-collar or professional training.

The Middle-Class Revolt: Eroding the Epistemological Basis for Hierarchy

While the reforms described above cannot be ascribed in a simple way to any kind of working-class movement, nevertheless the commitments of its major protagonists—minorities, the poor, students—certainly contained aspects of what has been referred to as proletarian ideology.[11] In particular, there was a significant thrust towards social egalitarianism, and a concern for the democratization of the notion of culture. In contrast, but closely allied with this, there was the resurgence of ideas and practices that, while also radical, more clearly spring from the traditional soil of bourgeois ideology. Such ideas and practices have, at their centre, the radical middle-class notion of individualism, with its demand for freedom from the constraints of social institutions, and the unfettered pursuit of personal fulfilment. Such ideology, compounded with aspects of Freudian psychology, humanistic-existential philosophy, and artistic "modernism," resulted in demands that the individual be freed not merely from institutional constraints (traditionally in the U.S. seen as those of government), but from conventional social roles and a repressive sexual identity. The bureaucratic mentality, with its emphasis on instrumental rationality, was replaced with the notion of the liberated individual—spontaneous, authentic, and self-determining.

While the resurgence of the notion of individuality reached dramatic and spectacular proportions a decade ago, its disappearance from the social stage may be, in many ways, more apparent than real. As Hans Dreitzel (1977) has convincingly argued, its message has in fact continued to permeate our society and been increasingly embraced by an important section of the middle class. At the centre of this continuing "revolt" has been a pervasive questioning of, and dissent from, aspects of the prevailing bureaucratic and instrumental rationality. There is the ever-widening concern with personal growth and "self-actualizing" experience, and an insistence not only on individual rights and liberty but also,

more profoundly, on the satisfaction of individual needs and expectations. Such expectations have been most visibly focussed on the domain of our "private" lives—sexuality, self-awareness, emotionality, and personal relationships. Its preoccupation with notions of "organic" growth and harmony has led to a rejection of, or dissent from, some aspects of corporate technology, and a concern with "holistic" notions of health-care, nutrition, and so on. Perhaps the most powerful political symbol of this revolt has been the continuing importance of the environmental movement, with its implicit insistence on the redefinition of man's relationship to the natural world—away from the prevalent notions of "conquest," "mastery," and "domination," to one of harmony and mutuality. While the environmental movement continues to represent a powerful negation of the instrumental rationality of corporate industrialism, and a demand for a more existential approach to human activity, the other important and enduring influence of the '60s—the women's movement—continues as the cutting-edge of the liberating insistence on self-definition and self-determination, rather than the socially ascribed identities of convention and stereotypical categories.

It has been suggested by a number of authors that this middle-class "revolt" has produced a profound paradox. The rush for lives that are more individuated has left in its wake the debris of torn-up social bonds and human commitments, and the restless quest for symbols and meanings that might constitute a viable culture. The radical insistence on the centrality of individualism in this has fed into the accelerating emphasis on the domain of "private" concerns to the increasing detriment of that which is public—the intensification of a narcissistic self-absorption. This argument is proposed by Richard Sennett: "As concern for questions of selfhood has grown greater, participation with strangers for social ends has diminished—or that participation is perverted by the psychological question." The obsessive desire, Sennett argues, to "authenticate oneself, one's motives, one's feelings," and the preoccupation with questions concerned with "whether I am good enough, whether I am adequate, and the like" (Sennett, 1977, p. 11) have supported a trade-off between public and private concerns, between greater psychic absorption and less social participation.

Since the 1960s, demands for educational reform by some sections of the middle class have, to an extent, reflected these tendencies. (Once again, as in the "democratization" of culture and its effect on curriculum, we do not wish to exaggerate the real influence of these changes; what is important here is the significance of their perception, particularly by those hostile to them.) Perhaps nowhere is this more clearly evidenced than in the widespread celebration (in theory if not in genuine practice) of the notion of individualization in the process of learning. The acceptance of a notion of individualized learning does indeed pose a potential threat (of course, at this time, more apparent than real) to the epistemological basis of the school's role in the reproduction of the division of labor. This is made clear in an article by Zvi Lamm, "The Status of Knowledge in the Radical Concept of Education."

Lamm argues that the implication of an individualizing (or as he calls it, individuating) and self-actualizing approach to education leads to a stress on the notion of the distinct or unique in each human being—diversity, he argues, is a necessary condition for achieving this. In such an approach, education is viewed as a process through which "the individual actualizes his unique personality and crystallizes his unique identity" (Lamm, 1972, p. 128). Learning becomes less concerned with the acquisition of social roles or the internalization of the values or norms of a specific culture. Instead, creativity becomes central to pedagogy, and subjectivity a test of the validity of knowledge. As Lamm argues "knowledge and creativity are considered together, knowledge is seen as the object of creativity" (p. 132). There is, he says, "the rejection of the inherent prescriptive structure of knowledge. It is not the laws according to which knowledge is organized which dictate the permissible limits of its manipulation, but the characteristics of the creative person which determine the type, the scope, the direction ... of the manipulations possible" (p. 132).

At the same time, the criteria of subjectivity in the learning process rest on an epistemological choice in favor of an existential position. Knowledge, Lamm argues, exists in the learner when it is meaningful to his life. It is the subjective experience of knowledge which imbues it with validity: "The moment the teacher recognizes subjectivity as the test of meaning, he grants the student the status of hard factor in education, and knowledge becomes the soft factor which must be adapted to meet his requirements. At the same time, he also abolishes the authority implicitly granted knowledge in traditional conceptions of education, and with it his own authority as the one who imparts knowledge" (p. 134).

From such a description of the epistemological consequences that inhere in the notion of individualization, it is possible to understand why such educational demands may be viewed as disruptive of the traditional relationship between schooling and the reproduction of the division of labor. The school, if it is to be viewed as legitimately able to operate as an agency of social selection—to effectively and non-arbitrarily discriminate between individuals' intellectual capacities—must utilize uniform, standardized measures of ability, and commonly accepted definitions of what it is to be "bright," "creative," "dull," and so on. It is precisely this which the individualizing pedagogy begins to undermine. In asserting the uniqueness and non-comparability of individual abilities, capabilities, and so on, it challenges the standardization of measures required for the schools' role in the social selection process and erodes the fixed and objective view of the nature of knowledge against which students can be uniformly judged. From such a perspective, for example, the choice of traditional grammar lessons vs. creative writing raises profound epistemological, ideological, and ultimately sociological questions. Creative writing, with its pronounced commitment to subjective validity, is of course harder to judge in any uniformly agreed or comparable manner. The same difficulty makes it clear why such subjects as the "new" mathematics (with its emphasis on process rather than result), or artistic, creative, or critical pursuits, engender the hostile or deprecatory attitudes that they commonly do. Each represents areas that

defy any relatively simple mechanism of evaluation or assessment, and hence undermine the apparently consistent basis for intellectual selection that underpins the schools's role in the reproduction of the social division of labor.

One final note on this apparent challenge by sections of the middle class to the clearly ordered effects of traditional pedagogy. The seeming paradox is more apparent than real in the decision by those who clearly appear from the school selection process to opt for what appears to be their self-destruction through the erosion of standardized processes of evaluation or judgment. In fact, the result is not so much to eliminate the comparative assessment of ability as to make a quest for evaluation criteria more elusive to parents and students who are traditionally less successful in school. As Green and Sharp (1975), for example, show in their study of open education, assessment of students in this context moves from a relatively strictly defined cognitive framework to a more diffuse social-psychological one. Not surprisingly, use of the open classroom with its individualized pedagogy creates for working-class parents and children more unknowns in the process of selection, and the likelihood of increased frustration as it becomes more difficult to "train" children for success (through, simply, a few extra hours of tutoring in reading, arithmetic, and so on). In the demand for a return to basic skills, the impulse is for a return to a clearly stated, well-ordered hierarchy of school knowledge, and for the elaboration of an explicitly laid out, standardized mode of evaluation. Only this, it appears to its protagonists, guarantees the continuation of the traditional role of schooling in the reproduction of the school division of labor, and the fulfilment of expectations regarding social and occupational mobility.

Basic Skills and the Crisis in White-Collar Labor

While I have pointed, in this paper, to the effects of working-class and middle-class ideological challenges to the epistemological basis for the social division of labor—challenges which have contributed to the development of the basic skills movement—perhaps the decisive influence has been the result of those policies pursued by the dominant class interests in society. Such policies must be understood less in terms of recent or short-term changes and more in the basic developments of monopoly capital. Central to this has been what is sometimes referred to as the "proletarianization" of white-collar and professional work.[12] Such work—the "prize" of diligent and successful schooling—has increasingly lost its privileged or qualitatively superior character vis-à-vis manual work. Its increasingly specialized, fragmented, and mechanized character, in addition to the permeation of bureaucratic standards and criteria for its accomplishment, has frequently eroded the hitherto advantaged situation of those engaged in white-collar and professional occupations. While the "cleanness" of office work, the opportunity to work downtown, wear a suit and tie, and so on, still indicate superior status for such workers, they do not entirely compensate for the commonly reported paucity of interest, autonomy, or creativity in such jobs—attributes that are precisely those promised by the completion of the appropriate quantity of schooling and professional training. The dissatisfaction engendered

is clearly evidenced in not only the rapid spread of white-collar unionization, but the industrial-style militancy of many professional groups (public school teachers being, perhaps, the clearest example). Such behavior has indicated a breakdown of clear white- and blue-collar differentiation, and the erosion of the traditional basis for social-class distinctions; however, one cannot disregard entirely the continuing superior prestige of workers associated with the process of conceptualization, planning, or administration rather than with direct production.

Alongside changes in the notion of "intellectual" work has been the effect of what is seen as the overproduction of educated workers. The apparent surplus of potential workers with degrees and diplomas has led to the general devaluation of educational credentials. This tendency will likely assume critical proportions as the present fiscal crisis of the state ensures a dramatic restriction in the employment of these educated workers (for example, the effects of budgetary cutbacks in education and human services).[13]

While we cannot elaborate here on current economic policies pursued by the dominant economic interests, the long-term effect of these policies (certainly intensified by recent policies of state and federal governments) is the devaluation of the results of successful schooling. The absence, however, of a critical social-political perspective among wide sections of the working and middle classes has resulted in such developments being blamed less on economic policies that fail to promote full employment and the generation of work situations commensurate with educational preparation and professional expectations, and more on the "problems" of schooling. "Open-door" policies of schools, "social promotion," "grade inflation," and the erosion of educational standards are seen as being at the root of the problem in their tendency to reduce the selectivity of the educational process (and thus over-produce qualified "educated" workers). In other words, the eroding position of white-collar or professional workers in many fields is viewed less as a problem of inadequate employment opportunities and more as a consequence of schooling that has become too easy.

Within the context of this "proletarianization" of white-collar and professional work, and the perception of a surplus among educated workers, it is clear why policies that have as their consequence greater selectivity among students might be pursued. Such policies, by reducing the supply of educated workers, would, it is felt, likely restore the hitherto valued and prestigious position of such workers. More simply, it would increase the "payoff," both monetary and in the nature of the work, for those most diligent or successful in the classroom. The result of such a perspective is, of course, the demand for greater restrictiveness in schooling through an intensified process of evaluating students, whether through standardized tests, competency exams, or other selective measures (that are also likely to benefit the middle class in their competition with students from working-class homes). All of this, as we have seen, occurs in a framework which asserts the need to restore the traditional basis of school evaluation—a need to "return" to the ordered epistemological universe of the 3Rs, or a related curricular outlook.

* * *

The basic skills movement, as we have suggested in this brief analysis, represents, above all, an attempt to restore the eroding relationship between schooling and the reproduction of the class structure—a relationship which, for reasons described above, has become one of crisis. Schooling as an investment in intergenerational mobility is viewed, increasingly, as a dubious venture. It is, indeed, paradoxical that a movement which is, in itself, in many ways the living indictment of educational developments in bourgeois society should purport to be its savior. The pursuit of "basic skills" is the very embodiment of a pedagogy that is entirely instrumental, one whose claims to human enlightenment are couched in terms of bare human survival. Its predominant association with such entirely utilitarian and vocational concerns represents the very quintessence of educational reform in twentieth-century bourgeois society.

The real paradox of the basic skills idea is that while it attempts to assert those distinctions characteristic of class-divided societies—between "culture" and "civilization," "mental" and "manual" labor, and so on—the very notion of "basic skills" is an admission of the disintegration of these distinctions. Thus, while schools in bourgeois society are moved in the direction of increasingly specialized, fragmented, and utilitarian concerns, they are also expected to affirm those generalized cultural attributes that legitimize the superior status of those employed in the area of conceptualization, planning, and administration and the subordination of those relegated to manual labor. And yet it is precisely the erosion of any notion of culture that is embodied in the present focus on basic skills, "minimum competencies," and so on. Education has replaced any concern with the general apprehension of the meanings and values in society, or the development of the faculties of critical inquiry, with a preoccupation with the acquisition of those instrumentalities necessary only to attain and maintain one's place in the labor market. As Goran Therborn (1978) notes, while the subordination and contempt for manual labor is not unique to capitalist civilization, unlike other epochs ("pre-capitalist, feudal, mandarin"), what is set against it is not "a possession of general 'culture' ... but specific mental activities—mental labour." In other words, the basic skills movement represents an attempt to uphold educational standards through a pedagogy that is itself an admission and a reinforcement of their erosion. It is an admission of the incorporation of education into the market place. It is an advancement of the process by which educational activity abandons any purpose other than being a prelude to mental labor in a context in which, as Norman Birnbaum (1969) suggests, the inhabitants of industrial society become ever more culturally constricted or impoverished. It is in this sense that the basic skills movement is part of an epistemological and ideological response to the present educational and social crisis—a response that makes clear that it is much more a part of this crisis than a solution to it.

Notes

1. This is especially apparent in work connected with what is sometimes referred to as "revisionist" educational history, or with analyses of education that adopt a "cultural reproduction" perspective. Among the wide range of authors connected with these approaches, there is an overwhelming propensity to "fix" the character of education entirely within the matrix of dominant class interests and ideology.

2. For an important discussion of this see, for example, Raymond Williams, *Marxism and literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

3. For an early presentation of this view, see Raymond Williams, *Culture and society, 1780-1950* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1968). See also H. Svi Shapiro, Education and the state in capitalist society: Aspects of the sociology of Nicos Poulantzas, in *Harvard Educational Review* (August 1980), 50(3); and Shaping the educational imagination: Class, culture, and the contradictions of the dominant ideology, in *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* (in press).

4. The development of the theory of a "new working class" was spurred on by the events of May 1968, in France. See, for example, the work of Alain Touraine or André Gorz. In the United States, see, for example, Stanley Aronowitz, *False promises* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), or the work of Alvin Gouldner.

5. Perhaps the most influential expositors of such reform during this period were Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, in *Teaching as a subversive activity* (New York: Delta, 1969).

6. For a good summary of the characteristics of such programs, see Alan A. Glatthorn, *Alternatives in education: Schools and programs* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975).

7. Culture is understood here in its anthropological sense as a "whole way of life," not in the limited and selective usage as the accumulation of intellectual, artistic, and literary products which comprise a "cultural heritage."

8. See, for example, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, *Aspects of sociology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), especially chap. 6.

9. It is this view of culture that is described by the Brazilian radical educator, Paulo Freire. See, for example, his *Education for critical consciousness* (New York: Seabury, 1973).

10. The concept of "cultural capital" refers to the notion elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977), and Basil Bernstein in *Class codes and control*, Vol. 3: *Toward a theory of educational transmissions* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

11. Raymond Williams distinguishes a "proletarian" from a "bourgeois" ideology or culture not in terms of whether it is "a uniform possession of all the individuals who might, objectively, be assigned to that class. ... We mean, rather, that this is the essential idea embodied in the organizations and institutions which that class creates." For the working class, argues Williams, this is the basic democratic collective idea, "and the institutions, manners, habits of thought, and intentions which proceed from this." See R. Williams, *Culture and society, 1780-1950*, p. 313.

12. See, for example, Stanley Aronowitz, *False promises* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), or Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, *The hidden injuries of class* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

13. See Michael Harrington, *Decade of decision* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), pp. 269–70: "In 1980, for instance, between 20 percent and 21 percent of the labor force will hold degrees, but the share of professional and technical workers (the classic place for the middle class) in the economy will be between 14.9 percent and 15.4 percent (in 1960, 10 percent of the labor force had finished college and professional and technical workers were 11 percent). Another projection estimates that, in 1985, 2.5 college graduates will be competing for every 'choice job', thus generating a 'surplus' of two hundred thousand degree holders."

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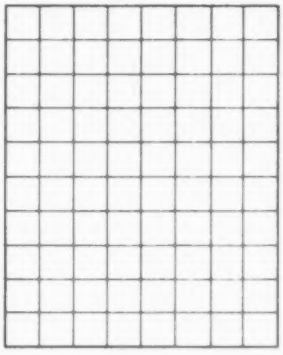

Cuban, L., 'Transforming the frog into a prince: Effective school research, policy, and practice at the district level', *Harvard Educational Review*. vol. 54, no. 2, 1984, pp. 129–51.
Larry Cuban, a former school superintendent in the U.S.A., presents a critique of school effectiveness research in terms of its implications for teaching and school administration at local levels. He argues that the school effectiveness approach is severely limited, especially, by its employment of top-down strategies to achieve, essentially, the extremely narrow goal of raising test scores. The extent to which his comments on various American reports are appropriate to recent state and federal reports in Australia should be considered.

Fitzclarence, L., & Giroux H., 'Curriculum theory and the politics of curriculum production'. *New Education*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1984, pp. 17–28.
In this paper, Fitzclarence & Giroux appraise the importance of radical educational theory which in recent years has challenged traditional views of schooling and has allowed teachers to understand better how knowledge, culture and social relations are managed in schools. They argue, however, that radical discourse has remained at the level of criticism and has not assisted practitioners in actually bringing about substantial change in schools. In this paper, therefore, they begin to develop a 'language of possibility' and to develop important elements of a practical, radical pedagogy that offers hope for sustained educational reform.

Freire, P., *Education, The Practice of Freedom*. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, London, 1976.
In this book Freire takes up many of the ideas which were expounded in his famous *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and develops them in relation to specific educational practices intended to help form critical social consciousness among oppressed peasants in an underdeveloped country. There are many lessons in Friere's work among peasants in South America for education in a modern industrial society.

Giroux, H., 'Public philosophy and the crisis in education', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 54 no. 2, 1984, pp. 186–94.
In this paper Henry Grioux argues that current educational debates in the United States are dominated by a 'new' public philosophy, apparent in a number of education reports, which regards educational outcomes as being directly linked to the needs of business and industry. The notion of 'excellence' in this philosophy is extremely shallow, he suggests, in that it ignores the role of education in the formation of responsible citizens who would

possess 'critical literacy' and 'civic courage'. He concludes that this latter educational role would require the creation of schools that are sites of learning rather than instruction, and that would encourage social interaction and human emancipation.

Goodlad, J., *A Place Called School.* McGraw Hill, New York, 1984.

This influential report on American education lacks the stridency and jingoism of most of its contempories. It presents a sympathetic view of the problems of teachers and schools and is one of the most extensive studies of schooling to be undertaken anywhere. Topics such as school effectiveness and school reform are dealt with in a manner which illuminates the issues but falls short of developing a critical perspective in relation to them. The book is most useful for its mass of detailed information and description of school practices.

Hannan, B., *Democratic Curriculum: Essays on Schooling and Society.* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985.

This book is a collection of essays of one of Australia's prominent curriculum reformers. Bill Hannan explores the meaning of democratic curriculum and its implications for school and society as well as for teaching practice. A helpful introduction by Doug White guides readers to some of the more interesting essays. Of particular relevance to many of the issues raised in this monograph is the excellent 'Letter to an alternative teacher', modelled on the brilliant little book by the children of the Italian town of Barbiana, *Letter to a Teacher.*

Hinkson, J., 'Education: The new conservatives'. *Arena,* vol. 71, 1985, pp. 99–110.

This relatively brief paper was inspired by an extraordinary attack upon public education that was published on the front page of the *Australian* newspaper on 2 February, 1985. The article, a rather crude exposition of conservative educational views, was headlined, 'The Lies They Teach Our Children' followed by 'Vipers in the Nation's Classrooms'. In this paper, Hinkson does not address the *Australian* article so much as the emergence of a strong conservativism in Australian education which is highlighted by its front-page prominence. He argues that educational conservatives are responding to genuine educational concerns but are offering 'solutions' that are fundamentally flawed. None the less, their persistance is forcing from governments a conservative response which, if not challenged, could lead to further social divisions in Australian society.

Keeves, J., 'A reply to Malcom Skilbeck'. *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 22 no. 2, 1983, pp. 111–20.
It is important to read this paper in which John Keeves, chairman of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia, defends the Committee's report, *Education and Change in South Australia*, against the criticisms made about it by Skilbeck in the paper which is reproduced as a reading in this volume. Readers are left to judge for themselves the adequacy of Keeve's response.

National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk; The Imperative for Educational Reform*. National Commission for Excellence in Education, Washington, 1983.
This is the most publicised and most influential of a series of American reports on Education. It is a very brief report and should be read to gain an understanding of the educational debate in the United States and its conservative orientation. Although more strident and jingoistic than the recent Australian reports, it should none the less be compared with them to see whether there is any congruence or complementarity of themes such as 'excellence', standards, basic skills, the relationship between schooling and industry, discipline, motivation and others.

Passow, H., 'Tackling the reform reports of the 1980s', *Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 1984, pp. 674–83.
The history of reform reports over recent decades is the subject of this paper. Passow argues that the current conservativism in education in the United States mirrors that of the late 1950s and early 1960s following the launch of Sputnik by the U.S.S.R. He contrasts this with the educational climate of the 1970s. Passow concludes that many of the current recommendations for 'improvement' must be regarded as simplistic and unrealistic as well as conservative.

Quality of Education Review Committee, *Quality of Education in Australia, Report of the Review Committee*, AGPS, Canberra, 1985.
The influential report of this committee chaired by Professor Peter Karmel, of the earlier 'Karmel Report' fame, has had a mixed reception from Australian educators. The Melbourne *Sun* newspaper announced its release with the front-page headline 'Teachers Get a Bad Report'. The report deals with 'inputs' and 'outputs' of education in the decade from 1974 to 1984 and makes a number of recommendations. These should be considered in the light of arguments about the nature of educational reform in this monograph.

Rice, A., 'After bureaucracy, what? An Australian case study'. *Urban Education*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1983, pp. 40–58.
This paper reports a study of high school teachers in Victoria which indicates that, although they possess the autonomy to devise their own curricula, teachers continue to produce socially and politically conservative curricula. Although independent of administrative direction, Rice found, school-based curricula generally mirror that which was formerly prescribed by central education authorities. The author explores reasons for this relative failure of the 'alternative' education movement, and for the persistence of conservative curricula and largely conservative attitudes among teachers.

Rowan, B., 'Shamanistic rituals in effective schools'. *Issues in Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1984, pp. 76–87.
This interesting paper seriously questions the status of school effectiveness research. Rowan claims that the distinctive feature of 'effective schools' research, in contrast to much other scientific work, is its 'shamanistic' approach to the problems of schooling. Through dubious research methods and careful manipulation of statistical findings such research holds out the fond and unrealised hope that complex educational issues can be simply resolved. The spread of the school effectiveness movement, Rowan concludes, is due to its rhetorical and ritualistic power rather than to its appropriateness for education.

Woods, G., 'Schooling in a democracy: Transformation or reproduction?'. *Educational Theory*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1984, pp. 219–39.
The social role of schooling in a democracy is the subject of this important paper. Woods argues that this role is only partially developed at present because of the inherent contradiction in schooling which attempts to enhance a system of political equality, democracy, within a system of economic and social inequality, capitalism. The paper attempts to suggest how educators might enhance the ideals of democracy by working towards genuine education reforms which would equip students to control their own destinies and to 'act democratically in an undemocratic society'.

About the author

Lawrence Angus taught in several public and private schools in South Australia, Victoria and the United Kingdom before joining Deakin University in 1983. His principal academic interest is in critical approaches to educational administration with particular emphasis upon the influence of practices of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation in the construction and legitimation of forms of culture and knowledge. His related empirical work has embraced a number of areas including the restructure of educational management and provision in Victoria, classroom teaching and curricular practices, Catholic education, pupil participation in schooling, and community involvement in education.

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